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Katie Talbert leads OD&T's comprehensive job search training for Metro interns in session held Feb. 6.

## OD&T's in-service training sets Metro interns on career path

By LAURA KLOTH

(Feb. 19, 2009) Lessons about what not to say during a job interview and just how personality plays a role in the type of job to seek, were part of an in-service training provided to Metro's interns this month.

Due to the rainy conditions, interns completed the Feb. 6 in-service training indoors, but apparently didn't mind because many provided positive comments afterward, said Katie Talbert, a two-year intern in the Organizational Development and Training Department (OD&T), who organized the event.

Along with the mock interviews, Metro's 52 interns attended sessions on resume writing, business acumen, and speed networking where they crunched through each other's work histories, and shared Metro work experiences.

Emphasizing good eye contact and a firm handshake, Senior Human Resources Analyst Sandra Blanco-Sanchez conducted mock interviews where she pointedly told interns to



Intern Tawny Gestuvo, at right in checkered jacket, writes about her experience at the job search training seminar.

## In-service training gives motivational vibe

By Tawny Gestuvo

answer questions honestly, and she gave them tips on tackling illegal subjects. Questions like, "Are you married?" and "How far do you live?" are not appropriate since they are not related to the position, she said.

"I would steer away from that question where you turn it around and say, 'Do you have a concern regarding that?' It's okay to stop and ask," Blanco-Sanchez said.

My experience as a Metro intern has been a boost of inspiration. It has helped me gauge my goals and visualize where I want to be one year from now and 10 years from now. It was definitely a great thing to see and know that interns have the support they need to make the transition into the workforce.

Despite current economic strains on the job market, OD&T stressed to interns that it is never too early to be prepared for opportunity to knock on your door.

With activities that tested various work environment skill sets to quality networking time among peers, the lessons learned at the OD&T intern in-service training will be tools I will remember, utilize and keep in practice.

This month's theme proved to be timely and appropriate for interns throughout the agency. OD&T had us all thinking about the next step in our careers.

Withstanding unpredictable weather, all of the scheduled outdoor activities were seamlessly brought indoors and the motivational vibe from the coordinating staff was something the rain couldn't wash away.

She also encouraged her audience to do their homework about the employer.

"A lot of times we get interviewees who say, 'Oh yeah, I've taken the Metrolink.' Metrolink is not part of Metro. So right away, I know that they didn't do their research. We own the right-of-way, but we don't run Metrolink. So those are the kind of pitfalls that may come up," she said.

Another mistake candidates make is to over-analyze questions by an employer. For example, if an employer asks how you handled a difficult job situation, they're not trying to trip you up, she noted.



Interns Rebecca Johnson, left, and Priscilla Jimenez, at right, pair up for three-minute speed networking session. Photos: Gayle Anderson

"Are you a problem solver? Are you going to melt under pressure? That's what they are trying to get at. They are trying to measure your personality and make sure you're going to be a good fit, and you're not going to be a stress case because nobody wants to deal with a stress case," she said.

Talbert told interns to consider their personality type before beginning a

job search and to study the work environment. She guided interns through the PACE personality test, which in the simplest terms, distinguishes personalities into four color categories: reds are adventurous; blues are harmonious; greens are curious, and yellows are structured preferring predictable job scenarios.



Emphasizing good eye contact and a firm handshake, Senior Human Resource Analyst Sandra Blanco-Sanchez conducted mock interviews.

"Would you rather work alone, or in a team? Are you a big picture thinker or do you excel in making sure all details of your job are complete?" Talbert said, sharing that sometimes they could fall into a couple of areas.

Senior Development & Training Specialist Cynthia Shavers led a business acumen workshop where interns spoke more about their current duties.

William Bolanos, an intern in the Policy and Research Department, said he helped to digitize and upload Metro's historical videos onto You Tube for access through the Metro Library website. "Organization is key in what I do," he said, adding that Metro's library is one of the largest available.

Camila Hashim spoke about her experience compiling reports in Service Performance Analysis Department. "I love it a lot," she told the class.

Shavers encouraged interns to absorb all they could to not only benefit their careers, but also to benefit the employer.

"When you like your job, you not only do your job better, but you actively look for ways to improve it," Shavers said.

"We make Metro look better when we take the extra mile, when we make sure we are responding appropriately on the phone, giving them the information that they need or taking the time to just listen. You know so that a person walks away satisfied. And that's one of our core values — satisfied customers," she added.

The training session couldn't have come at a better time for Metro Store Intern Ivan Moreno. Soon after the session, Moreno interviewed with the Los Angeles Police Department where he plans to begin work as an officer.

"It really helped me a lot. I used what I learned there. It was like perfect timing," Moreno said.

