

City aims to halt grads' exodus

Web site to gather job, internship info

Thursday, May 15, 2008 7:16 AM

By [Nicquel Terry](#)

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

College students leave Columbus after they graduate because there's not enough information on job opportunities and other local resources, a survey suggests.

A Web site that will collect that information in one place could help change that, city business leaders say.

"We are building a communication bridge," said Todd Hoffman, president of Collegia, a Massachusetts-based company hired by local business leaders to retain more of the talent attracted to local colleges.

Almost half of 1,725 college students surveyed by Collegia said they would leave the city because their job prospects were in other cities. Most of the students surveyed attend Ohio State University, Otterbein College or the Columbus College of Art & Design.

"Companies from other regions visit Columbus to recruit students, but local businesses make less of an effort," Hoffman said.

"If they were more proactive and came to campus ... they would broadcast a better sense that there are real opportunities here," said Hoffman, who presented his findings yesterday at a Columbus Metropolitan Club lunch.

The Columbus Chamber and the Columbus Partnership, another group of business leaders, hired Collegia to help make the area more attractive to young professionals.

Ohio State University sophomore Terry Traster, who attended the event yesterday, said he receives an overwhelming flood of e-mails about activities and internships every day.

"It's hard to pick and choose and sift through it all," said Traster, 20, of Amherst, Ohio. "I need a one-stop shop that will guide me through it all."

Karli Wurzelbacher, who finished her art-history degree at Ohio State last year, said she and most of her friends did not have a problem finding jobs in Columbus after graduation.

But many settled for lessdesirable positions because they wanted to live near friends, said Wurzelbacher, 22, who now works at the Columbus Mu- seum of Art.

"I haven't seen a deliberate initiative to keep graduates here," Wurzelbacher said. "But I don't think people leave Columbus because they can't find a job."

The Web site Hoffman is helping to develop would include information on internship and job opportunities, student discounts and entertainment. He said it would launch in the next three months, so it would be up by the time college students return to school in the fall.

Collegia has developed similar sites for Philadelphia and Boston.

Nancy Kramer, founder of the Columbus-based marketing company Resource Interactive, said a Web site could be an effective solution for retaining college graduates.

"This is a crisis for our state and subsequently for our city on a lot of levels," Kramer said.

ntery@dispatch.com

Copyright © 2008, The Columbus Dispatch