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AT DOUGLAS EDUCATION CENTER A CAREER DOESN'T START WITH A DEGREE – IT STARTS WELL BEFORE THAT

MONDESSEN, PA., FEBRUARY 3, 2011 - Richard Nelson's resume speaks for itself. Professionals in the film industry would easily recognize the astounding amount of film projects where he's gained his professional experience – *Here there be Monsters*, web series; *Romeo Must Hang*, feature documentary; *Edgar Allan Poe's Requiem for the Damned*, feature film; *The Game*, short film. In the film industry environment, he prides himself on being confident, comfortable and prepared. One other piece of information about Nelson also stands out: he already knew where he was going to work the day he graduated from school.

The Fall 2010 Douglas Education Center (DEC) graduate is just one of the many success stories that come to a gainful conclusion each year – thanks in part to the career services that DEC offers. Nelson and other highly motivated students are gaining a distinct advantage in the post-graduation job search by availing themselves of the various career-related resources – including externships/internships, cover letter and resume-writing assistance, and mock interview workshops – that DEC offers as early as first semester.

“Our mission is to help students prepare for all aspects of the job search, starting in first semester and well past graduation,” said John Matechen, Director of Career Services at DEC. “But before that even starts, the most important thing we do is to get to know the students. And, in particular, what their expectations and goals are. Once we know that, we can help them stay on track and keep their goals in focus.”

The Career Services Department at DEC takes the students through the process of seeking out career opportunities and helps them refine their resume-writing skills so they can articulate experience, skills and interests to a potential employer. “In the case of the art and entertainment programs, we help them to prepare their portfolios. We also help them with their interview skills – employers, no matter what industry, are always looking for students with good verbal and communication skills. We work hard to help students get professional-level experience that is relevant to their chosen program of interest. Our role at DEC is to give our students enough resources that a smoother career path forms as they graduate and transition into the world of work,” Matechen adds. Most students at DEC are required to take a Professional Skills Workshop course – which covers resume writing, cover letter preparation, interviewing techniques and job search skills in addition to the services provided by the Career Services Department.

Nelson, who holds an Associate in Specialized Business Degree in digital filmmaking from DEC, tapped into the Career Services Department as a first semester student and quickly gained exposure to a variety of career opportunities. “They’re very approachable,” said Nelson. “You can get a lot of help. They’ll provide job leads, assist with your resume writing and instruct you on the skills needed for future interviews. The mock interview workshop is a great way to prepare because you are exposed to various questions that are commonly asked – I’ve even been asked some of them on real interviews!”

When it comes to career services, the operative word is “early.” Despite ambitious efforts to attract more students to career services initiatives as first semester students, most students tend to procrastinate when it comes to developing their professional skills. Therefore, career services personnel generally don’t wait for the students to make the first move. It is not uncommon today for career services representatives to make presentations in the classrooms and at student orientations. Any opportunity to get the word out is utilized.

One of the major services that the Career Services Department at DEC offers its students is an exclusive Concierge Service, which helps to match the students’ skill sets to potential employers. The Career Services Department works closely with each student to identify their strengths as well as the industry and geographic location in which they wish to work. With that information, the Career Services Department prepares a custom database of potential employers listing the company name, location, main contact, address, phone number, total sales and number of employees within a 5- to 100-mile radius around any zip code in the nation, or city in the world. If the student prefers, the Career Services Department will work them to contact potential employers on their behalf to help arrange interviews. There is no limit or expiration date to The Concierge Service. It is offered as a lifetime assistance program.

“At Douglas Education Center you step into the professional environment immediately,” noted Nelson. “The Factory Digital Filmmaking Program at Douglas is run exactly like a Hollywood studio. Aside from having classes, The Factory tries to emulate how it would be like in the real world with all the regulations and rules that professionals need to adhere by in the industry. Tie this into The Concierge Service at DEC and I feel I’m well-prepared,” added Nelson.

“The feedback we receive from employers about our students is extremely positive,” said Matechen. “They are well-prepared, motivated and enthusiastic.” DEC continues to work with organization across the country to develop working relationships with national employers ranging from Hollywood special effects shops, museums, toy manufacturers, and medical prosthetic labs to local employers like the Monongahela Valley Hospital, Excelsa Health, Maverick Dental Laboratories, Benzidreams FX Studio, Philip Pelusi and Stephen Szabo Salon just to name a few. Armed with a solid resume and freshly honed job-searching skills, DEC students can find career opportunities down a variety of avenues. “I have to tell you. It’s refreshing to the DEC administration and instructors when we encounter a graduate in their place of employment – styling hair, as a credit in a movie theater or on TV – even checking us into a doctor’s office. It’s pretty cool,” said Matechen.

For more information about Douglas Education Center, please visit www.dec.edu.

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ABOUT DOUGLAS EDUCATION CENTER

Established in 1904, Douglas Education Center (DEC) is the premier creative career institution located in Monessen, PA. DEC creates an educational atmosphere that not only fosters the highest standards of excellence in all students, but also helps these students develop an awareness of social responsibility and ethical behavior. DEC offers programs in special make-up effects, digital film, illustration, graphic design, cosmetology, medical and business. DEC instructors are industry professionals who have actual working knowledge and experience in the programs in which they teach.