

TYSONS CORNER CHAPTER COHOSTS AN ACQUISITION DAY EVENT WITH UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Over the past few years, there have been a multitude of articles, presentations and reports documenting the human capital shortages in the acquisition management area of both the federal and commercial markets. Sufficed to say, yes, there are very definite staffing needs and, yes, there are jobs available around the country. Part of the challenge in filling these positions has been to educate students, recent graduates and mid-career professionals looking for a change about what “acquisition” is, why it is important to our nation and why it is an excellent and interesting career field to enter. Today, due to the challenges of filling critical acquisition positions, there is a sense of urgency in both the federal government and commercial industry to reach out and inform. This short article is about one of those initiatives and I write it with the ultimate hope that other NCMA Chapters, student groups and universities will read it and partner together to “get the word out.”

Tyson's Corner Chapter of the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) and the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) recently teamed to produce and host an Acquisition Day for UMUC students and others who were interested in learning more about the acquisition career field and job opportunities in that career field. The event was held at the University's Academic Center at Largo Auditorium in Largo, Maryland. Attended by academia, students, recent graduates, mid-career professionals and other interested parties, the event generated excitement and extended dialog amongst the speakers and attendees. In fact, the question & answer and networking extended close to an hour after the formal conclusion of the event. The University, the Chapter, the speakers and the attendees all received value from this event and felt that it was a success. A great deal of the success was due to the type and way the information was delivered and the speakers who presented it to the audience.

The two hour presentation began with an overview of what the acquisition career field was all about, complete with some definitions, roles, responsibilities, required skills & competencies, opportunity

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statistics and median salary information. This part of the session set the stage for the remaining portions and ensured that the audience had a baseline of fundamental career field information from which to go forward. The next two parts of the presentation provided the audience with the federal and commercial perspectives of the career field. The speakers were younger professionals whom the audience could clearly identify with: one of which was a Contract Specialist from a federal agency, the other a Contracts Administrator from industry. Both speakers were able to provide interesting personal perspectives about what it was like to be hired and work in their respective organizations as well as more specific details as to salaries, opportunities, responsibilities, working environments and challenges. The next speaker presented information about NCMA and the value NCMA provided to both students and acquisition professionals in their career journey. The session was concluded by two UMUC speakers who informed the audience about the value of continuing education throughout a person's life and career. After that, a general question & answer session was conducted which extended far beyond the formal conclusion of the event.

NCMA chapters, student groups and universities, when teamed together, can produce informative and successful events to educate students and job seekers about the acquisition career field. This event is only one example. More events such as this one will help "get the word out."

A copy of the presentation can be found on the NCMA Tysons Corner Chapter website at <http://ncmatyson.org> on the Member Resources page under the Articles and Presentations link. In the near future the videotape of Acquisition Day will be made publically available on UMUC's website.

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