



Eastern Michigan University College of Business | Marvin Shaouni

FEATURED STORY

Excerpt From “Learn to Earn: Internships Work”

BY: TANYA MUZUMDAR, 6/26/2008

The invitation list at the [Council of American Survey Research Organizations](#) international conference in Miami last February was a roster of people at the industry's peak – everyone from President to VP to ... Adam Stone, Intern. Stone was able to attend the conference while interning at [Gongos Research](#), an Auburn Hills-based market research firm.

Historically, the intern image has been one of a hapless soul tipping a dozen vanilla soy lattes in one hand and restraining the boss' pet St. Bernard in the other. On the flipside, unconvinced employers don't see the financial upside to training someone who'll be out the door four months later.



Indeed, interns are imperative for Michigan's economic growth, enlightened bosses claim. Ann Arbor think tank [Michigan Future, Inc.](#) recently convened a statewide committee of leaders from educational institutions, industry trade groups, businesses, and government to find ways to grow the state's young professional population. At the meetings, many executives expressed difficulty with recruiting students from the University of Michigan, says committee member Jessica Pfeiffer, executive director of the Detroit-based [MORE](#) (Michigan Opportunities and Resources for Entrepreneurs) program.

Research says....

For progressive area companies like Gongos Research, students are paramount. Eight of its 75 full-time employees are interns, says Susan Scarlet, the firm's marketing and public relations director. Gongos plans to grow both its permanent staff and intern count by 10% annually. And apprenticeship has always been part of management's philosophy; Camille Nicita, an intern at the firm's inception in 1991, is now a principal.

Area schools like [U-M Dearborn](#) and [Oakland University](#) send interns Gongos' way, plus graduates come from further afield, such as Georgetown University and the University of Georgia. Interns are not only marketing majors, but also have economics, statistics, social science, and mathematics backgrounds.

Gongos typically hires nine or ten students annually. "We give our interns the same role and responsibility that we give a full-time junior analyst," explains Account Director Amy Hernandez. "They're basically partnering with a more senior researcher



and they're learning the business while they work here." Tasks include new business attainment, proposal writing, and pricing projects.


After just four months on the job, Stone was promoted to permanent employment last February. The 2006 MSU psychology graduate feels that ample substantive internships would keep more fresh college grads in Michigan. "It's also about the quality of the workplace. If there were more places like [Gongos], we'd definitely be keeping more students," he says.

Scarlet cites working with [Fortune 500](#) clients and Gongos upper management as desirable for interns. Stone has already worked with an executive recently hired from prestigious market research firm Harris Interactive. "Coming in at that level, to be two, three, four months into a position and really interfacing with specialists in this industry who have worked for some of these top firms is really nice exposure for them as well," she explains.

Meanwhile, [Michigan State University's](#) (MSU) office of career services has hired a full time employee to help companies develop internships for MSU students. MORE inspires student entrepreneurship and also links employment-seekers with area small businesses – which employ 80% of the non-government workforce in the state, says Pfeiffer. Its successful [Entrepreneurial Opportunities](#) job fair, held in March, brought together 75 small high-growth companies and 900 students. 45 internships were offered, with another 100 pending, she says.

And interns are high-fliers. "They're working on billable client assignments and they have an interface with the client," Jacobsen stresses. "It is a very hands-on experience in aviation design, so that when they leave, whether they come to work for us or they go on to another firm, they've got a real sense of what it's like to work in the aviation industry."

Interns will bring more than a sprinkle of star dust to the state. A 2008 Michigan 50 Company to Watch, Jacobsen/Daniels Associates' revenue has more than doubled since 2004. And Gongos Research is on the 2007 [Inc. 5000](#) list of the fastest growing companies in America.

"I think we're in a good place of opportunity in southeast Michigan here. I'm just thankful every time we have young, very bright, educated people walking through our doors, because quite frankly, I think they keep us on our toes," Scarlet says. "They bring something to the table that the most seasoned of us wouldn't have thought of and I think that every great growth company can't exist without new blood."  [metromode](#)