



MECHANICAL ENGINEERING NEWS

February 21, 2003

A newsletter for the UML Mechanical Engineering community (also available online at <http://m-5.eng.uml.edu>)

Any items you would like to see included in the newsletter or any suggestions/comments?

Please email them to: peter_avitabile@uml.edu or leave them with Jackie Paradise in the Mech Eng office.

RESUMES - ticket to your first job

Many students put together a generic resume that really doesn't look any different than any other resume of any other Mechanical Engineering student at any other university. So why should a company hire you ??? Why should a company ask you to come in for an interview ???

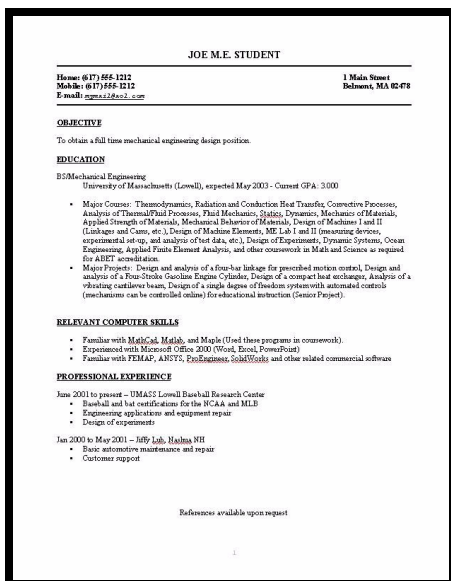
I have had many discussions with head hunters who work in the field placing engineers into many different engineering companies. Most have said very clearly "What does your resume say that makes a company want to bring you in for an interview ?"

Let's face it - there are many talented engineers graduating from many different universities. A Mechanical Engineering curriculum is pretty much the same at all universities - at least if you look at a course catalog. Here at UMASS Lowell, I think we put out a different breed of student - one who is ready to hit the ground running and ready to work in a variety of capacities to get the job done. Your resume needs to get that point across and the standard one page resume just doesn't do that.

What is the difference between your resume and another student. Well for one thing, here at UML students do a lot of project work which involves working in a team, performing analyses and writing reports. These are critical skills that are needed in the workplace and your resume may not be selling your capabilities to their fullest. I recommend that you add a second page to your resume as an optional attachment that is not required to be read by the reviewer but offers additional explanation of some of your detailed course work done here at UML that is above and beyond what is written in the typical course catalog. In the section where you list the courses and grade point average, make a note that some additional detailed information regarding aspects of detailed projects performed are included on the attached sheets.

Let's face it, there is a significant amount of work that is performed in some courses that is clearly much different than the normal homework, quiz, test scenario that is typical of many courses. You need to let the person reviewing your resume know that here at UML, we do much more. If the reviewer doesn't want to look at it that's fine. But if the reviewer is trying to make a decision on which student to bring in for an interview and there are two resumes to choose from - most likely there will not appear to be any difference between the courses taken by two Mechanical Engineering students from different schools. Both students will have taken typical Solids Courses, Thermofluids Courses, Laboratory Courses, etc. And if both students have the same grade point average, what difference does it make to the reviewer which student should be called for an interview? Most likely if the reviewer recognizes a name brand school then that student will likely be called for no other reason than the reviewer recognized the school name.

So give the reviewer a chance to see who you are and what you have done with some supplemental information attached to your resume. It would be useful to categorize this information. The one page



Example of "THE ONE SIZE FITS ALL RESUME"



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resume may only address the fact that you were a student assistant in a computer lab, or teaching assistant for a laboratory or that your capstone project involved evaluation of some printed circuit boards. These short brief notes are not sufficient to identify what was actually accomplished or performed. For instance, the Mechanical Design course involved the design, build and test of a linkage. Those short descriptive words really don't even start to tell anyone how much work was done in that course. I would recommend a short paragraph on the supplemental page that details all the work done in that course (team design, analysis, weekly reports, actual machining and building the linkage to your detailed design drawings generated, etc.). In the Mechanical Laboratory courses, the final five weeks of a two semester sequence, all the student groups work independently to design a test measurement system to a vague set of defined requirements. The integration of theoretical concepts to specify a test configuration to identify the measurement system is not a trivial task and is a significant accomplishment. Do you think all schools do this type of laboratory exercise? Based on comments I have heard from transfer students, I can tell you that what we do here at UML this is very different. The same is true of other application oriented projects in other courses you have taken.

Another important point is that UML students are exposed to commercially available software for many of the courses and projects that they work on. Many of these software packages are used in industry to solve engineering problems. The more skills you have, the better you will fit into a company. Make sure you mention some of the software that was used as part of your project. But also be sure that you don't oversell yourself. Much of your exposure to commercial software just skims the surface on the use of a particular package. It is best to just identify that you are familiar with certain software packages but don't make claims that you are well-versed in a particular software package – unless you really are!

So let the reviewer know that you have had special exposure to real engineering applications that require a well versed assortment of engineering courses to solve real engineering problems. The critical skills

learned in theoretical courses are supplemented with practical applications. These projects involve team work, report writing and presentation skills that people in engineering companies need to do on a daily basis. Clearly, you can start your job well prepared to perform everyday functions necessary.

I know that the resume outline generally suggested clearly states that only one page is all that you should provide. But let me ask you when you drive down the road and you are looking for something to eat – is there really any difference between Burger King, MacDonald's, Wendy's and the other fast food places. You are not going to make a U-turn on a busy road and sit in traffic to get to a particular fast food place. You will probably just pull into the first place you see that is convenient. A one page resume is a fast food place as far as a reviewer is concerned. Put together a resume that says something special about you. Make the reviewer want to call you for an interview. You need to sell yourself. The one page resume may not be doing justice to your real capabilities and educational experience here at UMAS Lowell.

I will be having a resume writing workshop for the Mechanical Engineering students shortly. I am planning on holding this workshop on Wednesday in the early afternoon. Watch for details and if you need help writing your resume come ask for some pointers.

Mechanical Engineering Seminar Series - Speakers for Spring 2003

Feb 26 Sylvain Ligonde, MSC Nastran

Mar 5 Charles Roche, Pratt & Whitney

Mar 12 Alan Nathan, U Illinois-Urbana

Mar 26 John Seymour, Applied Mechanics

Apr 2 John Mirageas, FLIR Systems

Apr 9 Rick Greenwald, SIMBEX

Apr 16 Ton Vasko, Pratt & Whitney

Apr 23 (open)

Apr 30 (open)