

## Professional development program connects students and employers

Successfully transitioning from college student to polished professional takes practice. By integrating professional and career development skills into the business curriculum, that's exactly what Oakland University's ACHIEVE program delivers for undergraduate business students.

But that's not all it does. Thanks to the active role business professionals from the community play in ACHIEVE as mentors, coaches and volunteers at mock interviews, networking sessions and other events, students gain knowledge from a wealth of valuable sources. Those real-world skills are critical in helping them launch their careers.

### Developing professionals

For Erica Shantz, MGT '17, that connection between classroom and real world became crystal clear when a job offer materialized after an ACHIEVE networking workshop. It was there that Shantz met Matthew Karrandja CAS '97, vice president of sales for LHP Engineering Solutions.



*Matthew Karrandja CAS '97 helped Management student Erica Shantz launch her career after meeting her at an ACHIEVE networking event.*

A longtime ACHIEVE volunteer and speaker, Karrandja seeks to instill an understanding of how important networking and communication are in today's business world. "Erica got it," he says. "I stole the show. She was fantastic."

Shantz's ability to speak with determination and clarity at that session led to an interview with LHP Engineering recruiters. An offer soon followed. Now Shantz is Sales and Recruitment Coordinator for LHP.

The LHP hiring team agreed Shantz's skill set and attitude set her apart. "She's like a draft pick," says Karrandja, which means that LHP is investing heavily in her future at the firm, with her supervisor already discussing a new, more advanced role for her after she graduates.

For Shantz, her position at LHP Engineering is providing her a one-of-a-kind growth experience. "I'm learning a lot," she says. "I've gained more skills and learned how to have a big backbone in an industry like this. It's given me much better communication skills and sales experience. I keep learning, and I'm very thankful for this opportunity."

### Discovering talent

This serendipitous connection between student and employer would not have happened without ACHIEVE. Both Shantz and Karrandja are enthusiastic about this mandatory, three-course program, which helps professionally prepare Oakland business students for the business world after graduation.

"ACHIEVE was a great experience. It gave me the confidence to go into a room and present myself properly," Shantz says.

"Most people don't realize how important it is to network. Most jobs are based on networking. I try to convey that message to students, that this might be one of the most important classes you take in college," says Karrandja, who also runs a nonprofit dedicated to helping the unemployed find new positions.

Beyond the class, Karrandja encourages students to include him and his partner and all of the other professionals they meet through OU in what should be their own growing network of contacts.

As much as ACHIEVE does for students, it also provides an outstanding resource for regional businesses, helping them discover talent and potential employees.

"ACHIEVE gives students the opportunity to properly prepare for the business world and helps employers find students who are ready for a job in the real world," adds Shantz.

### ACHIEVE a connection

A required professional and career development program integrated into the undergraduate curriculum, ACHIEVE helps Oakland business students transition from college students to high marketable professionals. Named a best practice by AACSB-International, the three courses guide students through discovery methods and on-campus experiences where they prepare, practice and perform professional situations. [oakland.edu/achi](http://oakland.edu/achi)

Consider how you can help tomorrow's business professionals prepare for the

That certainly has been the case with Shantz, according to Karrandja. “She has exceeded our expectations and is making the most of her opportunity.”

By Liz Lent

Oakland’s ACHIEVE program  
Here, business professionals are encouraged to interact directly with undergraduate business students by participating in mock interview networking skills workshops and other events. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. Contact Sherri Kerby at [kerby@oakland.edu](mailto:kerby@oakland.edu) to find out how you can get involved.