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## College career fair goes the online route

**A green alternative to recruiting.**

Companies find the virtual concept to be cost-effective.

By **Laura Raines**  
For the AJC

Landis+Gyr, a global leader in next-generation energy solutions, will interview Georgia Tech seniors and alumni at a college career fair this week.

"We need candidates to fill 32 positions, and 19 of them are in engineering. We are always looking for talented engineers," said Amy Cosgrove, vice president of human resources at Landis+Gyr's North American headquarters in Alpharetta.

Recruiting at Georgia Tech is nothing new for this company, but this time it won't be coming to campus to do it. It is a sponsor for the university's second virtual career fair.

A chance conversation with a Georgia Tech student inspired CareerEco founder Gayle Oliver-Plath to reinvent the traditional college jobs fair.

"I asked a student if I was on the right bus to the college fair and he said, yes, but that he couldn't go because he



CareerEco founder Gayle Oliver-Plath and Ralph Mobley, director of career services at Georgia Tech, discuss plans for a virtual career fair at the school. *Leita Cowart Special*

had class," Oliver-Plath said.

"With today's technology, I thought that there had to be a better way to hold a college career fair, a much greener way that would be more flexible," Oliver-Plath said.

Seeing eco-minded job seekers and companies connect online through her green business network, CareerEco, Oliver-Plath conceived of a virtual alternative where recruiters could upload their positions to the site, and job candidates could register and drop their résumés into the slots that interested them.

Over a period of several days, recruiters and candidates could further get to know each other through chat rooms and video interviews.

"College students are so tech-savvy these days. Everyone has access to a laptop with a videocam," she said. "There's a lot of time wasted standing in line at career fairs to get a 'clipboard' interview or be told to apply online anyway. Then there's all the travel time and expense of the companies who come and the work time they lose participating. This method saves time, money and the planet, because it conserves natural resources."

Sorting out all the boxes of printed materials sent ahead by companies for traditional job fairs, Ralph Mobley, director of career services at Georgia Tech, admits that these events aren't very green. Yet he knows the face-to-face encounters have val-

ue and result in employment. He sees virtual fairs as a way to augment traditional career fairs and expand services.

"Virtual fairs were tried back in 2001 or 2002 but disappeared as the economy got better. Now that the technology has improved, I think they are here to stay," said Mobley, who agreed to host CareerEco's pilot fair last November. Company participation has doubled for the university's second virtual fair.

"Virtual fairs give students and employers an easier way to recruit. Smaller companies that can't afford the cost of travel and hotel bills now have a way to reach our candidates," Mobley said.

Oliver-Plath said large corporations, government agencies and nonprofits also see the advantages and have signed up.

Cosgrove said the Georgia Tech event will be Landis+Gyr's first virtual college career fair.

"We are quite certain it will be one of our more cost-effective methods of recruiting," Cosgrove said. "When we go on-site to fairs, we typically take subject matter experts who can conduct a more technical interview. Previously, we've tried to choose experts close to the college, but now any of our engineering ex-

perts - we have about 5,000 employees worldwide - can conduct those interviews from their desks."

"Since Landis+Gyr is in the business of managing energy better, sponsoring a virtual career fair is a way of showing leadership and putting our money where our mouth is," said Vicki Trees, director of marketing and communication.

Polycom, a leader in teleconferencing, plans to recruit virtually for a summer internship program in its Austin, Tex., office.

"About half of our interns are engineering students, and we wanted to recruit at Georgia Tech, but the cost was too great before," said Erin Ryan, a human resources program manager in Austin. "This is a much less expensive way of getting the message out about our program."

The concept is growing. Oliver-Plath reported that the University of Tennessee and the Emory Alumni Association, in conjunction with its Goizueta Business School's Alumni Career Services, have signed on to hold virtual career fairs this year. It's one way for colleges to offer career services to all its alums, not just the ones who live close by, she said.