

Job help is only as far as nearest college

By Lee Andrews
staff writer

Are you frustrated that your current job doesn't match your potential or interests? Are you looking for help in selecting the right college major? Or are you concerned about making the most productive use of your retirement years?

Individuals who need a little help with career counseling can turn to area colleges for help.

Schoolcraft, Oakland Community College and Oakland University all offer testing and counseling geared for people seeking to establish themselves in a satisfying job.

TESTS include the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, which will compare an individual's interests with those of successful individuals in various fields. The premise is that a person will be happiest in a field where colleagues share the same interests.

The Meyers-Briggs test can tell a person about his work personality and what work environment will be best for him.

Computer exercises are also available to help clients set priorities on their values and interests.

The process of exploring new careers isn't easy, cautions Judy Hopkin, a career counselor at Oakland University's Continuum Center. Neither she nor any other counselor can wave a magic wand and put an individual into an ideal field. It takes a lot of digging and thought.

ONCE CLIENTS receive data from the tests, Hopkin meets with them to interpret the data and to suggest jobs and fields that might fit the individual. Then she encourages them to do "informational interviewing" — testing out job matches by interviewing people who hold jobs in these areas.

While Hopkin provides support and helps clients make decisions, she notes that only the individual can make the final decision about what job he will pursue.

John Bergman, a counselor at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus, said that tests and computer exercises should be viewed only as tools. They help individuals determine "who they are and where they're going."

The process may also vary in length, he said. It can take "six months to 20 years," depending on the individual.

A BENEFIT of going to career counseling is the gaining of a professional listener. Dr. Jean Pike and counselor Bill Heise of Schoolcraft College note that some clients need support pinpointing why they are unhappy with what they are doing. Often they find that people thinking about switching careers actually like their jobs but need a different environment or industry.

Hopkin asks her clients "Why do you want to change your job now?" The answer often indicates whether it is the job or other personal matters that are prompting the change.

Oakland University and Schoolcraft also offer specific programs to help. The continuum center at OU offers workshops that cover topics ranging from how to write an effective resume to how to interview for a job. A series called "Careers in Transition" helps jobholders seek out the optimal job for them.

SCHOOLCRAFT targets displaced homemakers and the unemployed. Through grants from the U.S. Department

of Labor, the college has scholarships available for training in nursing, secretarial skills and welding.

A Rochester woman who preferred not to be identified said she went to Oakland University for help in rewriting her resume. She wanted the finished product to reflect her training in therapeutic recreation and to help her gain a position as a consumer service representative in private industry. Hopkin helped her rewrite the resume to highlight how her current interests and skills could be an asset in a new field.

Another man came to OU in search of employment that would fulfill his potential. Even though he was in his late 20s and was already operating two small businesses and working part-time for a municipality, he was looking for more of a challenge.

AFTER TAKING a battery of tests and completing computer exercises, he found a focus. He is now attempting to get into the engineer-

ing technology field and is meeting with Hopkin monthly to research educational programs.

After 17 years of working with a government agency in Warren, a man in his late 30s said he is ripe for a change.

"In 20 years, will I be proud of how I have spent my life?" he asked himself. Now he's thinking of leaving engineering for computer science and is testing out that area by taking computer classes.

Many individuals who are taking early retirement from corporations are coming to the colleges looking

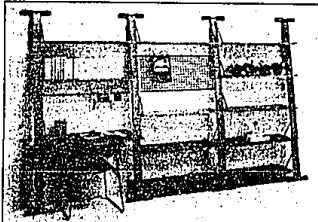
for counseling on how to put their skills to work during their retirement or semi-retirement years, Hopkin said.

Area residents do not have to be students at the colleges to receive counseling. Costs for the interest tests, computer exercises and two visits with a counselor range from \$25 to \$40.

Details are available at Oakland University, 370-3033; OCC's Orchard Ridge campus, 471-7616; and Schoolcraft, 591-6400.

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