

Young Professionals Career Engagement Program

The best jobs often don't come from applying to a job posting but through contacts and networking. To help young adults capitalize on that fact, the BYU Management Society introduced the Young Professionals Career Engagement Program during its annual Fall Leadership Conference in Provo. Since then, chapters in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the UK, and the US have taken steps to implement this new mentoring system.

The Young Professionals Career Engagement Program came to the global management society via the Colorado Springs Chapter, which has used the program successfully for the past several years. When BYU Management Society executive director **Jason Brown** heard about the program, "I was just blown away by how thought out and organized it is, and how much impact it has on students," he says. "Mentoring students and young professionals is a big part of what we do in the management society, which is why we want other chapter leaders to be aware of the program and hopefully want to adopt it in full or in part."

The program was the brainchild of Scott Pann, a management society regional director and past president of the Colorado Springs Chapter. When he and his wife, Debi, were called as multistake young single adult advisors for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nine years ago, Pann noticed that young adults often struggled with the transition from their formal education years to a substantive career. He offered to develop a career engagement program similar to one he had volunteered with at a local university—one that would help young adults gain confidence and jumpstart their careers. Church leaders were enthusiastic about the prospect, but because it wasn't an official Church program, Pann turned to his management society chapter to act as sponsor.

The Young Professionals Career Engagement Program differs from more-traditional employment programs in that it gives students opportunities to connect with and learn from highly successful professionals. It is open to both single and married young adults between the ages of 16 and 30, and it has two areas of focus.

In the Introduction to a Professional track, young adults can explore a variety of career options by meeting with professionals to get information, advice, and insights to help them discover if a profession is a good fit for them.

The more extensive Career Coaching program is for young adults who are nearing the end of their academic work—either in trade school or college—or who have recently graduated. These young adults are assigned a mentor who coaches them in critical areas such as fine-tuning their résumés and cover letters



and practicing interviewing. Perhaps even more important, the mentor introduces young adults to successful professionals within the field they are pursuing—real decision makers such as CEOs, department heads, and division managers.

In both tracks, the informational interview is a key component. As students prepare for and conduct interviews with numerous professionals, "it's as if their eyes are opened," explains Pann. "They begin to understand the various things they can do with their degree. And what often happens is that they'll get to the end of an informational interview and that business leader will say, 'You seem like an impressive individual. Would you be interested in applying for a position in our company?'"

Brown acknowledges that the one-on-one nature of the program requires effort, but he also emphasizes that every part of the program can be customized to fit the resources of individual chapters. The overarching goal, Brown notes, is "upping our game and increasing our understanding of how to mentor students and young professionals."

To ease the workload, the BYU Management Society has prepared a website, byums-mentoring.byu.edu, with materials to help chapter leaders launch the Young Professionals Career Engagement Program: instructional videos, guidebooks for participants and career coaches, sample emails, and links to external videos and articles; Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Mandarin Chinese translations of these resources will be added in the near future. But perhaps most compelling are the website's testimonials from young adults who've participated. "It's so rewarding to hear their stories and see the impact this program has," says Pann. "That makes the work all worth it."