



Pictured at top: Nathan Richards, a mechanical engineering student who is graduating this spring, was at the YSU STEM Spring Expo searching for a local full-time position.

Friday, March 1, 2024 **Deanne Johnson** **YSU STEM Expo Connects Students with Employers**

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio – Nathan Richards was scanning the list he prepared before attending the Youngstown State University STEM Spring Expo on Thursday. He had researched the companies and marked on the vendor map the employers he thought might be the best fit for him.

Richards, who is graduating from YSU this spring with a degree in mechanical engineering, wants to work in that field, maybe in automotives. With a girlfriend who is two years away from graduating and family living in the area, Richards expressed a desire to stay local if possible.

“It’s getting stressful,” Richards said of his approaching spring graduation date. Besides finishing his degree, he is currently interning for HuFriedyGroup, a dental company in Sharon, Pa.

Richards had plenty of employers to meet at Thursday’s event. There were 113 companies from all fields, according to Sherri Hrusovski, executive director of the YSU College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

“Every discipline that is in the STEM acronym is represented here today by our students,” Hrusovski said. She added that the number of students enrolling in STEM-related programs at YSU continues to grow, and the expo represents the best chance for the students to learn about new employers in the field, both here and elsewhere.

Employers, many of whom return for the biannual event each time, were given the opportunity to meet with students seeking full-time employment, as well as internships and co-ops.

Employers ranged from local, regional, out of state and even the federal government. For those looking for more seasoned employees, YSU alumni also are welcome to come back and take advantage of the opportunity to meet prospective employers.



Josef Cernevičius, left, who is focusing on engineering management while completing his master’s degree at YSU, meets Becky Wall, CEO of Dearing Compressor & Pump Co., along with Travis Tikkanen, Dearing’s human resources administrator.

Josef Cernevičius already has a job in manufacturing and a lifetime of experience, but he is currently completing his master’s degree at YSU with a focus on engineering management. He was using the opportunity at the YSU STEM Expo to see what his new degree could mean for his value in the job market.

One of the employers he was meeting with was Becky Wall, CEO of Dearing Compressor & Pump Co., who was looking for interns for three hands-on opportunities. Students could get experience with a local manufacturer building compressor equipment for the oil and gas industry. She has opportunities to work in the field, quality control and sales, which would let interns learn how to estimate and quote while working with customers.

“We’re local; we’re flexible,” Wall said. “Most of our engineers have come out of this program. Most of them started as interns, and it turned into full-time hires. We’re really proud of what the university does here.”

Wall said she loves having the opportunity to speak with young people and encourages even the freshmen to get experience because it counts when they come looking for a job after graduation. YSU encourages the STEM students to attend the event each time it is held.

And when they come back each time, the event gives Dearing a chance to become better known to students.

“I like to get face-to-face with the students,” Wall said. “My best day is when they come looking for Dearing. That means we’re doing our job with our messaging and our marketing, and they come looking for us. We had one today.”

Travis Tikkaner, human resources generalist, graduated from the Williamson College of Business Administration at YSU. He is only three years removed from walking in these students' shoes. He learned about Dearing from his professors, took the chance to apply and was really impressed when he interviewed there.



Three representatives from Vulcraft, all YSU alumni, attended the YSU STEM Spring Expo on Thursday. They are, from left, Rob O'Donnell, district sales manager; Sidney Laughner, sales engineer; and Bryce Blazek, sales estimator. Also a YSU alumni, Rob O'Donnell is a district sales manager employed for 26 years with Vulcraft, a division of Nucor Steel. He and other YSU alumni, including Sidney Laughner, sales engineer, and Bryce Blazek, sales estimator, always make sure Vulcraft is represented at the expo.

"We've recruited Youngstown State pretty hard for probably the past 10 or 15 years," O'Donnell said, adding they are looking mainly for civil and mechanical students for internships, co-ops and full-time employment. Those recruited by the company may work in the Midwest, but the company is diverse, with locations all over the country.

"We've had such good success [at this event] that it just makes us want to come back," O'Donnell said.