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CAREER CENTER WINS TOP HONOR FROM HANDSHAKE

CNU PRAISED FOR HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR JOB, INTERNSHIP GOALS.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | November 6, 2024*Read time: about 3 min*

Christopher Newport's [Center for Career Planning](#) has received a top award from [Handshake](#), recognizing it as one of the top 35 college career centers in the country.

Handshake, an online employment platform used by colleges and universities worldwide, honored the Center out of a field of 1,500 other schools for being superior in student engagement, saying that CNU is among the most effective at helping students use Handshake to achieve their career goals.

"The Christopher Newport University team deeply cares about its students. Their job curation, openness to new features, and thoughtful approach keep students engaged on Handshake. Their intentional efforts make it clear why they're deserving of this award," Handshake wrote about CNU.

From the time Captains accept admission to Christopher Newport,

they have online access to Handshake, which provides internship and employment resources and listings, job-seeking tips and resume assistance.

The Center uses Handshake as an integral resource to propel students seeking career opportunities. Handshake complements the Center's personalized one-on-one approach to assisting students, giving Captains the best of both online and in-person career guidance and job options.

"It feels great to know we are being recognized for helping students engage," said Sarah Hobgood, Director of the Center for Career Planning. "We tell students from the beginning about Handshake, and what an important resource it is. It's a one-stop shop."

Handshake, she said, opens doors for students to explore career paths and get practical experience that can help launch them into successful careers. The platform is interactive and students are able to explore various paths and offerings, while simultaneously honing their job-seeking skills.

Hobgood said Handshake plays a huge role in ensuring Christopher Newport students are employed after graduation. For the Class of 2023, 96 percent of graduating Captains were employed or accepted to graduate school within six months of walking across the stage.

The Center encourages students to take advantage of Handshake because it yields strong results, and many have done just that. In fact, 16.5 percent of Christopher Newport students use Handshake on a weekly basis, which far exceeds the usage rate among students at peer institutions, which is about 3.7 percent.

"We know our student utilization is strong," Hobgood said. "We want to help students in any way we can. Handshake is one way that we can do that. It's an incredibly valuable resource."

Each employment opportunity presented by Handshake is screened by the Center's staff before it is shared online.

The Center has identified six career pathways - business, creative, environmental and medical sciences, helping, public service and tech and analysis. The pathways are designed to help students discover and explore their interests and then connect them to compatible career ideas.

The Center labels every internship and job that is added to Handshake - between 200 and 300 each day - with the relevant pathways so students can focus their searches on their areas of interest. Students can then save those searches and receive a weekly email notification of new opportunities on Handshake that meet their criteria.

Access to Handshake is available to students even after they graduate and have started their careers. It is a permanent benefit to being a Captain.

Not only does the platform provide job and internship offerings, it connects students with CNU alumni who may also be utilizing Handshake.

"It's a great networking tool," Hobgood said.

The Center has worked diligently to increase its reach, both online and in person, to help students navigate their career journeys. Those efforts are paying off.

Individual student appointments at the Center have continued to rise, with 1,956 in 2022-23 to 2,116 in 2023-24. In addition, overall student engagement with the Center has jumped from 87 percent in 2022-23 to 95 percent in 2023-24, which includes 94.7 percent of first-year students interacting with the Center.

In addition, employer engagement with the Center has maintained an upward trajectory, with a 20 percent increase in unique employers participating in CNU job fairs. Attendance at the Fall 2023 Job and Internship Fair surpassed 600 students and overall fair attendance for the year reached 1,718.

"Both are attendance records we have not seen since before the pandemic," Hobgood said.



Director of the Center for Career Planning, Sarah Hobgood

The Center is on a mission to assist as many students as possible, both in person and through Handshake. The career magic frequently happens organically, especially when students engage with the Center and its staff, using all of their offered advice and resources to help obtain positive results.

“Sometimes students think they have to have a certain need or question to come here. They don’t,” Hobgood said. “Our message to them is, ‘Just come. We’ll take it from there.’”
