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The transitions in the business and government workplace over the last four years have seen a growing need for qualified students entering the workplace. This is especially true for those students coming out of human factors programs. In an effort to ensure that the flow of student graduates (particularly those with an MS) into the marketplace, CHI-Atlanta recently designated a university liaison for the city's university programs.

The need for this university liaison is due to the increasing sophistication of the workplace. This has often meant that current graduates are finding it difficult to find a place in the growing demands of the job market. A fundamental problem is that former graduates are finding that current graduates often lack the skills and understanding of the current workplace. For many professionals in CHI-Atlanta, too many jobs go begging. Why:

- Applicants cannot "speak" the language common to the business world
- Job seekers lack in-depth understanding of the User Centered Design Process
- Graduates do not know about the diversity of job opportunities and deliverables associated with each position

For those out in the field trying to employ junior members of their team:

- It is hard to advance when junior positions are not being filled
- Applicants now graduating from the same program are not being offered positions
- Recent graduates are turning to CHI-Atlanta members for guidance in shaping their resumes and/or learning the skills needed to fill positions

The change has come with the growth and shift in job requirements that require a thorough knowledge of user centered design as well as a background in usability.

As the recent Program Chair (6 years) for CHI-Atlanta, I was hearing too many comments from colleagues that "we cannot find qualified graduates to hire." So, in my capacity as the university liaison for CHI-Atlanta, I am working with our organization to help bridge this gap. We are planning to share with our local universities our experiences, provide input on the needs of the marketplace, and help provide insight into the job requirements for current and emerging positions.

This cross-cutting effort begins with the recognition that usability engineers in the workplace are not going away nor are core usability testing positions. Newly emerging positions, however, require an understanding of usability principles, but they also need practical experience with User Center Design, work with multi-disciplinary teams, an understanding of consultative services, environments, and core deliverables.

Why the change? Positions have and will continue to morph into themes such as User Experience Engineers, User Interface Architects, and so forth as the complexity of projects increase. Many technology projects are built overseas, but designed in the United States. In addition, the initial use of the term Information Architect has shifted as Library Science programs are graduating students concerned with the structure of information in complex content management and knowledge management systems. Thus, the competitive landscape has grown and the marketplace is requiring more and more skills of its job seekers.

In early February, CHI-Atlanta will host a program for graduate students at Georgia Tech in the Human Computer Interaction and Information Design and Technology programs. This workshop will be led by former graduates who work across industries and who often have unfilled the positions. The focus of the program is to highlight what students will need to know for the marketplace including types of job postings, the work processes and associated deliverables, the role User Centered Design, and the way to talk about their university training for the marketplace.

It is through this effort of CHI-A and graduates of local university programs that we hope to help students fill the positions in the Atlanta marketplace. During the workshop, I hope to bring our insights from the Atlanta experience into the overall discussion.