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## LSU Hosts Tech Industry Panel to Discuss How to Succeed in Industry

BATON ROUGE – Various technology industry leaders invited by the LSU Center for Computation & Technology, or CCT, led a panel discussion last month about what students can expect while working in the tech industry post-graduation. Eighty participants from various summer Research Experiences for Undergraduates, or REU, programs as well as faculty and staff from LSU, Southeastern University and Southern University attended the event, hosted by CCT.

The panel was moderated by Dr. Lou Guthrie, the workforce analytics manager for the Louisiana Economic Development Fast Start. The four panelists – Elia Brodsky of Pine Biotech, Blake Gonzales of Dell Technologies, Christian Holdsworth of DXC Technology and Josh Sonnier of CGI Federal – have all had many similar experiences learning to navigate the professional world despite having different backgrounds and careers.

Guthrie summed up the panelists' thoughts into four key categories: critical thinking, data interpretation, profitable productivity and teamwork.

Holdsworth said that working in the industry versus studying it brings different expectations when it comes to project structure and type of report.

"But, one thing I think is similar [to academia] is that you never stop learning. Technology is always changing. If you stop learning once you leave [university], then you are going to be left behind," he said.

While fellow panelists echoed Holdsworth's observation, they also agreed that technology is not the only necessary skill set for success in the field.

"You really got to understand what the problem is that you are trying to solve and who it is for. Who are those stakeholders and what exactly will you deliver to them?" Brodsky said. "Being able to sell something I think is a big part of business that is lacking in academia."

Sonnier, who manages recruitment for projects at CGI, expounded upon Brodsky's thoughts by suggesting students should start to learn these additional skills by first learning to sell themselves. He explained that having a portfolio of successfully completed projects, paid or unpaid, is one of the best indicators that a prospective employee will be able to deliver positive outcomes to clients.

"You may be uncomfortable. You may have to move. You may have to do something you don't like at first. Just go find something, even if it's not perfect. Do not look for the perfect job because you are not going to find the perfect job right out of college. You have a lot to learn and a lot to figure out. And then when your resume begins to fill out, it will be really easy to build your career the way that you want," Gonzales said.

More information about the panel, including a video recording of the event, is available at the CCT REU website at <http://reu.cct.lsu.edu>.



From right to left,  
Dr. Lou Guthrie, moderator, Elia Brodsky, Christian Holdsworth, Blake Gonzales,  
and Josh Sonnier, speakers, and Dr. Juana Moreno, organizer.  
Picture taken by Ame' Posey.

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