

# Campus Recruiting: Finding and Keeping Talented Young Employees

**Ben Rogers**

*Driver, CU Tomorrow  
Filene Research Institute*



## About Us

Deeply embedded in the credit union tradition is an ongoing search for better ways to understand and serve credit union members. Open inquiry, the free flow of ideas, and debate are essential parts of the true democratic process.

The Filene Research Institute is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit research organization dedicated to scientific and thoughtful analysis about issues affecting the future of consumer finance. Through independent research and innovation programs, the Institute examines issues vital to the future of credit unions.

Ideas grow through thoughtful and scientific analysis of top-priority consumer, public policy, and credit union competitive issues. Researchers are given considerable latitude in their exploration and studies of these high-priority issues.

CU Tomorrow is a Filene Research Institute clearinghouse for credit union young adult strategies. The project publishes research and open-source business plans to help credit unions attract younger members, promising young professionals, and younger volunteers. Initiatives include:

- **Business briefs**—open-source, young adult business plans for credit unions.
- **30 Under 30**—entrepreneurial SWAT team of young credit union professionals.
- **Community**—CU Tomorrow and Filene Web sites for publication and idea sharing.
- **Leagues**—statewide collaboration to implement CU Tomorrow programs.
- **Recruiting**—talented interns and new hires from high-profile universities.
- **Research**—academic research, focus groups, online surveys, and interviews.

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## About the Author



### Ben Rogers

The author, Ben Rogers, is driver of the Filene Research Institute's new CU Tomorrow project and director of the Institute's 30 Under 30 group. Ben is a former editor of *The CEO Report* and chairman of the National Directors' Convention. Ben holds a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University and graduated cum laude from Brigham Young University with degrees in English and philosophy.

## Acknowledgments

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Credit unions need to serve Generation Y. It's not enough, however, to send good financial products and cutting edge delivery into the marketplace without a team that can follow up with even better products five, ten, or fifteen years from now. Recruiting talented young professionals is necessary for credit unions to further serve their memberships and continue to grow.

This Filene business brief highlights opportunities and simple, proven tactics for attracting recent college graduates and young professionals.

## Market Need

An annual survey of college recruiters indicates that employers plan to hire 16% more new college graduates in 2007–2008 than they did in 2006–2007.<sup>1</sup> That means that attracting talented young adult employees will be increasingly difficult. Even if job prospects dim in the wider economy, college graduates will be increasingly needed to fill jobs as baby boomers retire and approach retirement age. Generation Y's propensity to change jobs frequently makes attracting and retaining talented recruits more important than ever.

Credit unions maintain a strong social philosophy that appeals to young adults, but credit unions often struggle to attract young professionals.

A survey of the Filene Research Institute's 30 Under 30 group shows

that none of these talented professionals planned a career in credit unions. Each came to credit unions by accident or in a roundabout way. National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) board member Rodney Hood recognizes this recruiting

shortfall and has emphasized it in his signature project for credit unions, *Blueprint for 2020*, a plan for disseminating recruiting best practices.

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## Program Details

The tactics outlined here can be effective in recruiting for full-time positions or for internships, depending on the needs of your credit union. They are effective whether you are recruiting at a community college, a small college, or a large national university.

For summer internships, you should start talking to prospects late in the fall semester and extend offers around spring break. For full-time positions, begin early in the fall semester as graduating seniors start making career plans, and extend offers around winter break.<sup>2</sup> Starting early requires long-term planning, but it helps win consideration from highly recruited, talented candidates.

1 2008 *Job Outlook Survey*. Bethlehem, PA: National Association of Colleges and Employees.

2 Resto, C., I. Ybarra, and R. Sethi. 2007. *Recruit or Die*. New York: Portfolio.

If possible, use community contacts to find professors or campus administrators who can point you toward potential recruits. A phone call to the right place can save you much time and effort.

If your credit union does not have existing contacts at your targeted college, contact the career center and use energetic job descriptions to highlight opportunities (See page 3). Both graduate and undergraduate students know that any new job, especially an entry-level one, entails lots of work, so instead of just describing responsibilities, highlight differentiators and opportunities. Some common credit union differentiators to highlight in job descriptions are:

- Socially responsible employer.
- Opportunities to work with senior managers from day one.
- Travel for job-related training.
- Opportunities to influence strategy immediately (this tactic is especially appealing to MBA recruits).
- Reasonable hours that allow for good work/life balance.
- Education reimbursement (for full-time hires).

Also use a job description to highlight specific skills a new hire will gain. For finance employees, this might include learning to run asset-liability scenarios or enterprise budgeting. For marketing employees, it could mean in-depth market research or running a direct mail campaign.

Elite students will respond to compensation, but more than that they will respond to the perception of exclusivity and prestige and the opportunity for quick advancement to leadership roles.

—Daniel Schneider, Princeton University

Many students begin their job search wanting to work at a prestigious investment bank or a Fortune 500 company, says Abby Scott, director of MBA career services at University of California–Berkeley’s Haas School of Business. As students begin to see the competition for those slots and realize what the work might entail, more than half start looking for better lifestyle and personal fits at less well-known companies, she says.

## Effective College Recruiting . . . on a Budget<sup>3</sup>

- Offer to host resume critiques or mock interview sessions on campus. In addition to building goodwill as a concerned local business, you earn recognition among the student body and get a sneak peak at prospective employees. The only cost is staff time and minor direct expenses.

3 Resto, C., I. Ybarra, and R. Sethi. 2007. *Recruit or Die*. New York: Portfolio.

- Send the credit union’s most engaging senior executives to do college interviews. You may not have the same brand recognition as a competing company, but recruits are impressed when they interview with a senior vice president or a CEO.
- Send a “Good Luck” card and a small gift, like a favorite business book, a gift certificate, or a care package to prospective recruits around the time of finals.

## SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

This internship description, which was submitted to several prestigious business schools, highlights some of the ways a credit union can set itself apart as a compelling professional opportunity.

Notice how the description highlights the opportunities to:

- Work in a competitive field—financial services.
- Interact with senior managers and the board of directors.
- Contribute to a “socially responsible, multimillion-dollar” institution.

### **XYZ Federal Credit Union Summer Intern / Strategic Market Analyst**

#### *Overview*

The primary responsibility of the market analyst is to use internal and external credit union data to forecast opportunities and challenges in our competitive [Region] financial services market. A successful analyst makes recommendations to the credit union’s senior managers and board of directors based on existing internal trends and specific member demographics, broad market and demographic data, and potential strategic situations. This position involves significant face-to-face working opportunities with the senior leadership

of a socially responsible, multimillion-dollar financial institution.

#### *Responsibilities*

The market analyst will drive one or more of the following activities:

- Develop an in-depth understanding of XYZ Federal Credit Union’s market position.
- Compare the credit union with a select group of local competitors.
- Forecast market conditions and recommend strategic products and programs to the credit union’s senior leadership.
- Work closely with the CEO and board of directors to set a long-term strategic direction.
- Assist in preparing a strategic outline for use by the CEO.

#### *Education and work experience*

- Must be working toward an MBA or other advanced degree in finance, economics, or marketing.
- Course work in marketing, financial services, strategic management, and/or consumer finance is preferred.
- Experience in any analytic discipline in a commercial context is preferred.
- Knowledge of standard desktop software tools is required.

## What to Measure

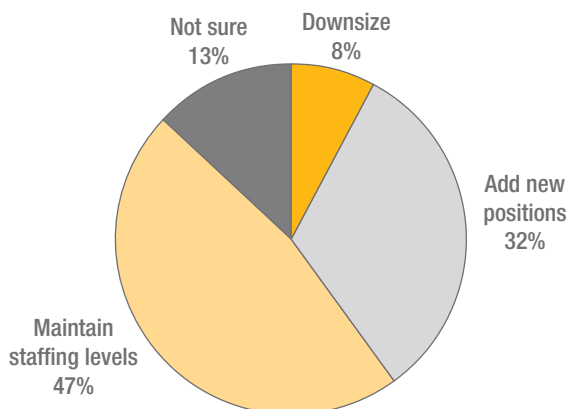
Tracking the adoption and results of CU Tomorrow business briefs is essential. If you choose to launch a recruiting program similar to those outlined in this document, please do three things:

- Track and report how many intern or job applications you receive.
- Report the number of interns or new hires actually hired as a result of your recruiting.
- Send your answers to Ben Rogers at [benrogers@filene.org](mailto:benrogers@filene.org).

## Cold Hard Facts

- Almost one-third (32%) of employers plan to add new positions in 2008, while half (47%) will maintain staffing levels, 13% aren't sure, and only 8% will downsize, according to CareerBuilder.com (see Figure 1).
- Among employers hiring directly from colleges, nearly 58% responding to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Recruiters report plans to increase their college hiring in 2007–2008. More than one-third (37%) say they'll maintain their college hiring at 2006–2007 levels. Less than 6% expect to trim their college hiring. Accounting and management professionals are in particular demand this year.
- Executive recruiting is beginning to trickle down to regular professional positions. The rise of services like H3.com and NotchUp.com, which offer cash incentives for referrals and interviews, shows that making contact with talented recruits may get even more competitive in the near future.

*Figure 1: Hiring Plans at U.S. Employers (2008)*



Source: "Slower, but Steady Hiring Expected for the New Year, CareerBuilder.com's Annual Job Forecast Reveals," CareerBuilder.com, December 26, 2007, [www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr409&sd=12%2f26%2f2007&ed=12%2f31%2f2008&siteid=cbpr&sc\\_cmp1=cb\\_pr409\\_](http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr409&sd=12%2f26%2f2007&ed=12%2f31%2f2008&siteid=cbpr&sc_cmp1=cb_pr409_)

## Wright-Patt Credit Union

In the waning months of his senior year at Wright State University, Dustin Limburg got a welcome call. A trusted marketing professor and informal advisor asked him to tune up his resume and send it in for consideration for a position at Wright-Patt Credit Union (\$1.3 billion, 341 FTE) in nearby Fairborn, Ohio. At the time, Limburg didn't know what a financial cooperative was, what a member was, or what a job at a credit union might entail. In fact, he had planned a career trajectory in sales for a homebuilding or technology company. The trusted professor explained to him that, while a credit union position might not be as lucrative, it could provide better strategic experience and build a more solid case for the MBA that Limburg still hopes to earn.

Getting the personal connection at the university was key, says Jeff Carpenter, the Wright-Patt vice president who recruited Limburg. With a history of involvement at the university, Carpenter was able to call a senior administrator, who put him in touch with the marketing professor. In fact, the professor referred six promising recruits to Carpenter, all of whom he would have felt comfortable hiring. Hiring somebody from Wright State was important to Carpenter because the credit union has begun to target young adults, including the Wright State student body, enlisted personnel at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and young adults in the broader community.

Follow these suggestions from Limburg and Carpenter about how to use a college connection to sell the credit union to prospective hires.

## FROM THE RECRUITER

- **Make contact in the right places.** There's nothing wrong with a college's career center, but it's preferable to ask a finance or marketing professor to help you identify promising recruits.
- **Be very specific about what you want.** Carpenter told the Wright State professor he needed a smart, outgoing student who could perform without lots of oversight. Specifics like that save time for you and your contacts.
- **Offer a meaningful job.** Don't squander goodwill with the university or your reputation with students by trying to line up college graduates as tellers. Professional positions for graduates are a "feather in the cap" for any college or university, Carpenter says.
- **Manage the credit union's salary expectations.** Exceptional undergraduate recruits can command \$40,000 or more depending on the market; good undergraduate interns are often paid hourly at \$10 per hour or more. MBA interns often expect \$1,500 or more per week for internships and possibly travel or housing assistance. Business school graduates from small or regional programs often ask for salaries starting at \$60,000. MBA graduates from nationally ranked universities often earn \$100,000 or more, according to a Forbes survey.<sup>4</sup>
- **Make the process move quickly.** Limburg accepted his job offer about 10 weeks after the first contact from his professor. The timing worked in this case, but Carpenter says he would have liked to have completed the process even more quickly.

4 Forbes, "Best Business Schools," August 16, 2007, [www.forbes.com/2007/08/16/best-business-schools-biz-07mba\\_cz\\_kb\\_0816bschool\\_land.html](http://www.forbes.com/2007/08/16/best-business-schools-biz-07mba_cz_kb_0816bschool_land.html).

## FROM THE RECRUITED

- **Emphasize work/life balance.** Many credit unions cannot offer the same compensation as larger corporations. But free weekends and 40- to 45-hour workweeks cemented Limburg's interest in Wright-Patt. He also appreciates the credit union's vacation plan for new hires, which is generous compared to some other prospective employers.
- **Play up growth opportunities.** Because they are often smaller than other companies, credit unions should emphasize recruits' potential to work on important projects much earlier in their careers. This is especially valuable for those who may want an MBA or who hesitate to commit to a career at one company. Young interns and employees value titles for their resumes, and any title that conveys exclusivity or prestige will be helpful. Princeton student Daniel Schneider recommends calling an internship program a fellowship, and advertising for "summer associates" rather than "interns."

### Duke Federal Credit Union

Lee Fogle, CEO of Duke Federal Credit Union (\$76 million, 35 FTE) in Durham, North Carolina, points out two reasons he counts three young MBAs among his staff of just 35: a good relationship with Duke University and a willingness to give talented young hires access to the strategic plan.

"If you go to work for Wachovia, no matter what, you're going to be somewhere where you're not very visible for a while," Fogle says. He knows his company can't compete for recruiting attention based on salary or prestige. In contrast to the multinational corporations that constantly recruit in North Carolina's research triangle (which includes universities like Duke, North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State), Fogle often begins interviews with MBA recruits by handing them the strategic plan and asking, "What do you think?"

Fogle promises to expose his MBA hires from day one to everything he sees and does as a CEO. And it has paid off. His chief operating officer, chief marketing officer, and executive assistant all have MBAs, two from Duke and one from Wake Forest University, and all have been hired within the past five years.

"Not everyone would fit into the [credit union] philosophy," Fogle says. For those that do, the small size of the institution is actually important. The size allows young professionals to lead in a meaningful way and build strategic skills that they might not get for years at a larger company.

Retaining those recruits involves staying true to the initial promises you make, Fogle says. Professionals will stay if they see the personal growth they were promised during their interviews.

Following are some recruiting suggestions from Fogle:

- **Sell recruits on high-level opportunities.** Emphasize the opportunities they will have to influence the strategic plan, interact with the board of directors, and learn firsthand about being a financial institution CEO.
- **Work your networks.** Many of Duke FCU's board members come from the university, so they already interact with promising students. Even if you don't have direct school ties, plumb the networks of existing staff who may have graduated from local schools, or of board members with contacts in the educational community.
- **Consider night and weekend students.** Many such students are more committed to the local area than traditional students, and they may not receive as much recruiting attention.
- **Use college career offices.** To attract the most attention to your credit union, Fogle recommends contacting the career office with manager-level positions and above.



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PO Box 2998  
Madison, WI 53701-2998  
Phone (608) 231-8550

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