

Rutgers tops MIT in survey of corporate recruiters' favorite places to hire

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Rutgers University topped MIT in a new survey of corporate recruiters' favorite places to hire.

The State University of New Jersey in New Brunswick came in 21st on the list compiled by The Wall Street Journal and released this week. The prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology was 23rd on the list.

The survey found that recruiters favor graduates from big state universities over those from smaller private and public schools and even the Ivies to fill entry-level jobs.

The state schools prove fertile recruiting ground because they offer a large pool of students, proximity to larger corporations and a wide variety of majors and specialties, experts said. The confluence of factors make for "one-stop shopping" at a time when corporate recruiting budgets are tighter, the Journal said.

Penn State placed first on the list, followed by Texas A&M and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Rutgers made it into the top 25 — a feat that its football team is still shooting for this year, noted Richard White, director of career services at the school.

"We're very pleased to be among some of the top schools in the country," said White. "We have a diversity of students and subjects — you name it and, pretty much, we have it."

The flagship campus in New Brunswick is well-positioned, he noted: 40 miles from Manhattan, 60 miles from Philadelphia and in the middle of a state that hosts a number of major corporations, especially pharmaceuticals.

Johnson & Johnson, which has headquarters near the campus, is, in fact, one of the largest corporate recruiters at Rutgers, White said.

The financial services industry in New York is the largest recruiter on campus, followed by the "Big Four" accounting firms and the pharmaceuticals, White said.

The proximity of major corporations also affords more opportunities for internships during the junior year of college — a real leg up in getting a paying job after graduation, White said.

It is believed Rutgers hosts more career fairs — 12 annually — than any other school in the nation, White said. Those fairs offer a chance for "live" interaction between job seekers and recruiters, still a key element in the days of online applications.

"Real people get to have real conversations," said White. "Networking like crazy is probably the most important thing they can do."

The largest of those fairs are held in January and June and are open to alumni and the public. Those events draw up to 3,500 job seekers and 150 employers, down from a peak of 250 before the economic downturn two years ago, White said.

Rutgers says it puts a lot of effort into helping students and alumni get jobs, including offering counseling and résumé preparation help. Spokeswoman Sandy Lanman said that last year the university even hosted Clinton Kelly, the host of TLC's "What Not to Wear," for a crowded seminar on how to dress for a job interview.