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**ILR School**



Ask any HR professional about their company's HR model and you are likely to hear, "Our HR function is undergoing a transformation." One impact of these transformations is the need to rethink how to develop HR professionals, especially early in career as technology has greatly impacted the function. This working group discussed how organizations are thinking about hiring and developing HR talent, especially in their first two years out of school. Julie Chaiken, VP, Chief of Staff, HR for HR at American Express and the Anu Lyons, the ILR School's Career Services Director, provided company and student perspectives on the topic.

### **Discussion Takeaways**

#### ***Corporate Perspective***

Julie Chaiken from American Express kicked off the session by sharing how they think about hiring and developing early career HR talent. They've had a program in place, recently revamped and renamed the Human Resources Leadership Development Program (HRLDP), for 17 years. They begin by hiring a small group of summer interns from several campuses, who spend 10 weeks working at Amex's New York City headquarters. The candidate profile includes a degree from an HR related masters program, three years work experience (can be outside of HR and include internships), and a passion for and interest in HR as a profession. The interns focus on strategic and impactful projects that would be part of a regular HR role. Key pieces of the program are high touch support, engagement with the HR community, and exposure to senior Amex leaders. Interns may then be offered a full-time role upon graduation into the HRLDP which is comprised of three rotations over two years – including both HR generalist and specialist roles. There is continued senior leader exposure as well as a VP level mentor, a peer coach, and an external coach. HRLDPs roll off the program into open positions based on business need, with the colleague's (Amex's term for employees) preferences in mind. The success of the program is measured by conversion of interns to full-time hires, graduation rates from the HRLDP program, and longer-term retention rates.

**As the full group launched into discussion, here were the takeaways:**

#### ***HR Rotational Program Constructs***

- Most participating companies have a rotational program in place; the remaining few are exploring one.
- Most programs are two years in length with either three or four rotations; one company had three experiences over one and one half years.
- Most programs are filled by converting interns to full-time. However, one company had recently implemented a rotational program and filled it with internal applicants with two years or less experience.
- There is a mix of hiring undergrads vs. graduates, depending on the experience level needed at the company.
- Rotations are primarily in the HR function – generalist/HRBP, specialist, and HR ops/analytics positions. A few others have rotations in consulting, marketing or other business segments, and international rotations.
- There were not many examples of formal learning during the rotational programs – it occurred mostly on the job. There are development opportunities through coaching, mentoring, and senior leader exposure.

#### ***Post-rotation program process/roles***

- Most companies place the participants into a role based on business need while taking into consideration personal preferences (type of role, location, etc.).
- Promotions are not guaranteed, but are based upon role and performance.
- There are some companies that use this alumni group as peer mentors for future rotational participants.

### ***Unique Practices***

- While several companies mentioned internal coaching and/or mentoring, one company offered both of those plus an external coach.
- Two companies incorporated either an individual thesis or group project into their programs. The individual thesis is a paper and presentation on a topic the person has passion for and the topics are wide ranging. The group project is focused on a current business topic.
- One company has participants reserve 40% of their work time for gig related roles or projects that they have an interest in.

### ***ILR Student Perspective***

Anu Lyons, the Cornell ILR School's Career Services Director, shared the student perspective with the group. She recounted data from the ILR Class of 2023 Post-Graduate Survey that noted key factors that affected a student's decision to accept an offer as (in order of most mentions): opportunities for career advancement; geographic location (climate, population, family/friends, etc.); and salary, benefits, etc.

She also shared anecdotal feedback from students:

- Rotational Programs are a plus --- but not ideal if they have too many geographic moves, especially for Masters students (dual careers, family). Undergrads and international students are more willing to relocate.
- Preference for in-person work location with flexibility to work remotely.
- Participate in a cohort experience – engaging with others at same career/life stage (but that doesn't have to be just HR function).
- Strong manager/supervisor.
- Access to leadership.
- Opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to actual projects.
- Clear mechanisms of support

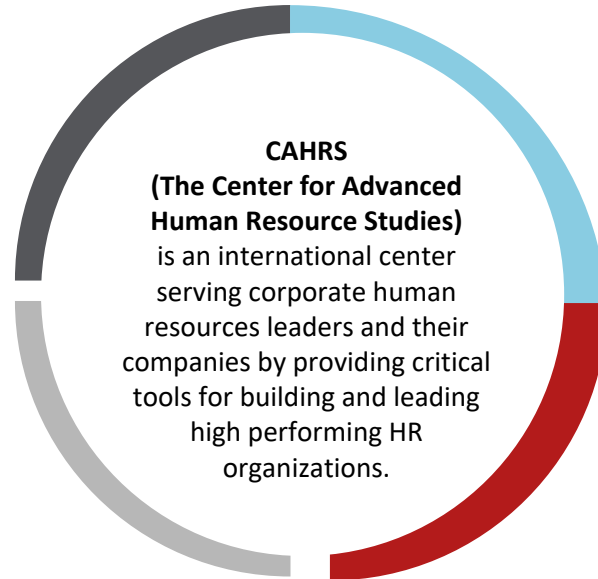
### ***Anu's recommendations to companies who recruit ILR students are to:***

- Focus on Learning & Development opportunities (coaching, informal mentoring).
- Feature stability and job security (not just the perks). This generation is worried about economy.
- Clarify professional trajectory including the progression timeline.
- Be transparent about Diversity & Inclusion – programs, affinity groups, local community, etc.
- Highlight CSR and ESG efforts -- what is the positive impact you're having?
- Leverage CAHRS connections in class and via recruiting – this both builds your brand on campus and shows a commitment to on-going development of your HR talent.

Lastly, Anu shared that companies are recruiting campus talent using a hybrid model – you need to have a presence on campus through things like career fairs, information sessions, coffee chats, etc. but interviewing is done more and more virtually. There are some differences between undergrads and grads:

- MILRs -- have clarity of what roles/companies they are interested in and want some kind of in person engagement (career fair, coffee chat, info session). Interviews could be virtual.
- BSs – are early career who are trying to figure out what they want and are more trepidatious of in person interactions.

Personal stories work best in information sessions. It's a mistake to repeat what's already on your website. A good format is 20 minutes of content with Q&A. Alums or people who have been through the rotational program have the most impact.



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