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## Dining, networking and learning at Career Service's etiquette dinner.

Katerina Mihailidis



Nicole Morsfield ([https://oaklandpostonline.com/staff\\_name/nicole\\_morsfield/](https://oaklandpostonline.com/staff_name/nicole_morsfield/))

Students picked which employers they wanted to be seated with during the dinner.

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Dinner is not just for dates. With Career Services, dinner is also for connecting with potential employers.

More than 100 students and around 15-20 alumni were registered for this year's event. All attendees had to register in advance.

According to Kaitlyn Barbas, the marketing and events coordinator for Career Services, the office has been organizing the etiquette dinner for the past four years to give students the opportunity to form a professional network.

"It's a good hybrid, where [students] are learning a lot about things that they'll utilize once they exit the university, and when they get into their professional role," Barbas said.

The professional development event had four main sponsors: the Oakland University Credit Union, Quicken Loans, Sedgwick and PWC. Other companies and employers that attended were American Axle Manufacturing, Enterprise Holding, RCO Engineering, LHP Engineering and CPI contract professionals.

Some departments at Oakland also sponsored the event.

Attendees sat at tables with employers and showcased their skills throughout the evening.

Prior to attending the event, the employers were given the option of selecting the students that would be seated at their tables based on major and/or grade point average, according to Barbas. The employers sponsored the selected students seated at their tables and paid for their dinner.

"We also ask the students which [employers] they prefer to sit with," Barbas said. "We try to sit students with the top two choices. . . that they prefer," she added.

According to Barbas, the dinner is not necessarily a recruiting event but "you never know what's going to happen."

Callista Gould, a certified etiquette instructor and keynote speaker for the event gave attendees tips on professional introductions, elevator talk and conversation starters.

Gould encouraged students to be their "imperfect, vibrant selves" to network and go after opportunities instead of just applying for jobs from home.

"People think etiquette is about conformity," Gould said. "It's really about knowing what to do so your personality can shine through, so you can be yourself."

Networking was from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. where attendees walked throughout the room and applied Gould's advice, speaking to their peers and various employers.

Then attendees sat to enjoy a three-course dinner from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., brought to the event by Chartwells, all the while Gould continued her interactive lecture.

Gould's instructions also touched on manners at the dinner table, including proper use of silverware while sharing entertaining stories of professional dinners "gone bad."

The etiquette dinner was an amazing opportunity, according to OU student Jordyn Bailey who attended the dinner for the first time.

Bailey said that the guest speaker taught her how to eat properly in a professional environment.

"We don't always realize what we're doing or what we're saying," Bailey said. "Many things people do may unintentionally come across as wrong to an employer or interviewer."

### Here are helpful tips for maintaining etiquette in a professional setting.

Shake their hand. Keep eye contact. Give them your name and tell them what you are presently doing. Tell them about what you have done in the past and what your goals are for the future. End the conversation with presenting a specific memorable skill and then say, "it was nice to meet you."

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