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Greg Menjivar, peer educator for the Career Center, helps CSUN student Charneice McGhee on resume writing Monday.

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## More people lie on resumes to land jobs

**By: Danette Spiers**

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Exaggerating one's experience by changing an old job title on a resume into a more sophisticated one can seem harmless, but it is considered resume fraud.

This is happening on a regular basis. Whether it involves what some would call a tiny fib by an applicant or an extreme case of dishonesty, there are people who are willing to take the risk to get a job.

"It's not a new phenomena, but what's disturbing about it is now it seems to be affecting every walk of life," said G. Jay Christensen, former CSUN management professor who has been researching resume fraud since 2006.

Christensen said he has discovered resume fraud is particularly common among federal officials, city officials, sports writers and university officials through his research for Career Directors International.

In the last year, some high profile cases in the news have included Marilee Jones, the former dean of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who lied about her credentials and also a chef from The Food Network, Robert Irvine, who was fired after it was revealed that he lied about his level of experience as a chef.

Kessler International's website indicates that more than 25 percent of resumes have false information, while 80 percent mislead employers in companies that conduct pre-employment screening.

There are a variety of issues that have brought about this problem.

Christensen said that a competitive market is one factor, as well as the slow economy, because people are worried about getting jobs and feel they have to have more of an edge than the next applicant.

The Internet has also made it easier to access examples of good resumes.

Christensen said people list jobs they never held and work they never performed. They can simply cut and paste the information from the Web, Christensen said.

But knowing exactly what is considered fraud is not always easy when people, especially students, are told to make themselves look as attractive as possible on paper.

"It can be a slight indiscretion or a major lie," said Christensen.

Patricia Gaynor, the assistant director for Senior Year, Transition and Employment Programs at the Career Center, said students should be honest when they list their job experience in their resumes and not overextend what they have done.

"People who read resumes for a living can read between the lines," said Gaynor. "They know if you were a cashier at a restaurant, but it's all in the way you write it."

Students can find positive aspects to put in their resumes such as pointing out that they learned good customer service skills in those part-time jobs. This is important because a resume is a person's advertisement, Gaynor said.

"It not only tells them what you've done, it shows that you have writing skills," Gaynor said.

Julia Shebalkina, the division manager at Independent Capital Management, said they get as many as 20 resumes a week from applicants looking to work as financial advisors. In the last two years, Shebalkina said she has not experienced any problems with resume fraud, but said she is aware that people embellish things on their resume.

"We definitely call their references to make sure they have worked there, but we don't call the high school or university to make sure they completed their degree," Shebalkina said.

Christensen said this is an area of concern.

"The education section of resumes is where a great deal of resume fraud is committed because of these diploma mills and fake degrees that can be checked and should be checked," Christensen said.

Christensen said that as a result of all this possible fraud, it has become more difficult for companies to verify information, and many are starting to use other companies that specialize in background checks.

Gaynor said she is also advising students to check their names on the Internet every two years because companies now search an applicant's name online to see what pops up, including blogs and MySpace pages.

"Employers are checking them out, as are graduate schools," said Gaynor. "If...someone goes online and finds you standing on a table naked three years ago that you forgot to take off, they're going to question

your problem solving, your decision making, and most likely they won't hire you."

Aside from these concerns, there are certain things employers are looking for when a resume arrives on their desk.

When Shebalkina reviews a resume, she said she looks first to see that it is put together well and that there is something on the resume showing the individual is motivated.

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