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Recruiters compete for talented black MBAs at NBMBA conference's opening day.

By Bryna Bates

News Source: National Black MBA Association

Houston (September 16, 2004) – More than 10,000 young, black and ambitious career professionals passed resumes, business cards and firm handshakes with representatives of several hundred Fortune 500 companies Thursday during the opening day of the National Black MBA Association's (NBMBA) 26th annual conference and exhibition in Houston.

In addition to the career fair, that spanned several acres across the ground floor of the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston, conventioners were offered an array of career advancement workshops, stirring motivational speeches and a poignant keynote luncheon presentation by noted attorney and longtime political power broker Vernon Jordan.

"This year's conference is our largest and most comprehensive national gathering yet," said Barbara Thomas, NBMBA president and chief executive officer. "We are extremely excited about the effort that so many of our sponsors and corporate partners have extended as participants with us in the career fair and our professional development programs.

More than 342 companies and corporations – including The Coca-Cola Company, Microsoft Corporation, Mars Inc. and Continental Airlines – sent recruiters to the career fair, traditionally known as one of the largest such annual events in the country.

If you're seeking employment, a career switch or an advancement opportunity, it was the place to be Thursday, most of the blue and black-suited participants said.

"In 2002 I got my job as a result of the conference," said Dedrick Rodgers who has attended conference for each of the past five years. "Sometimes you question whether or not the companies are here for face value or really hiring," he said, "but here, they are focused on employment."

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According to Thomas, tens of conventioners found employment at last year's confab; a mark she excitedly predicted would be exceeded this week in Houston.

"It's absolutely important for us to be here," says Sonya Yoo, a recruiter for Texas Instruments. "We're in hot pursuit of hot talent. We want to ensure that we utilize the conference as a top resource."

It was a refrain echoed by executives from Exxon Mobil. "We are continuously impressed with the quality of participants that come through this career fair," says Jackie Handy, an Exxon Mobil recruiting advisor. "We realize that finding great talent is the key to our success."

The NBMBA, founded in 1970 and headquartered in Chicago, is the world's largest association of black business professionals representing some 100,000 MBA graduates across the United States.

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