

# hillviews

vol. 46 no. 1 | **Spring 2015** | MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM



HEALTH *by* DEGREES

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# Staying connected

## Health Administration finds valuable links in online networking

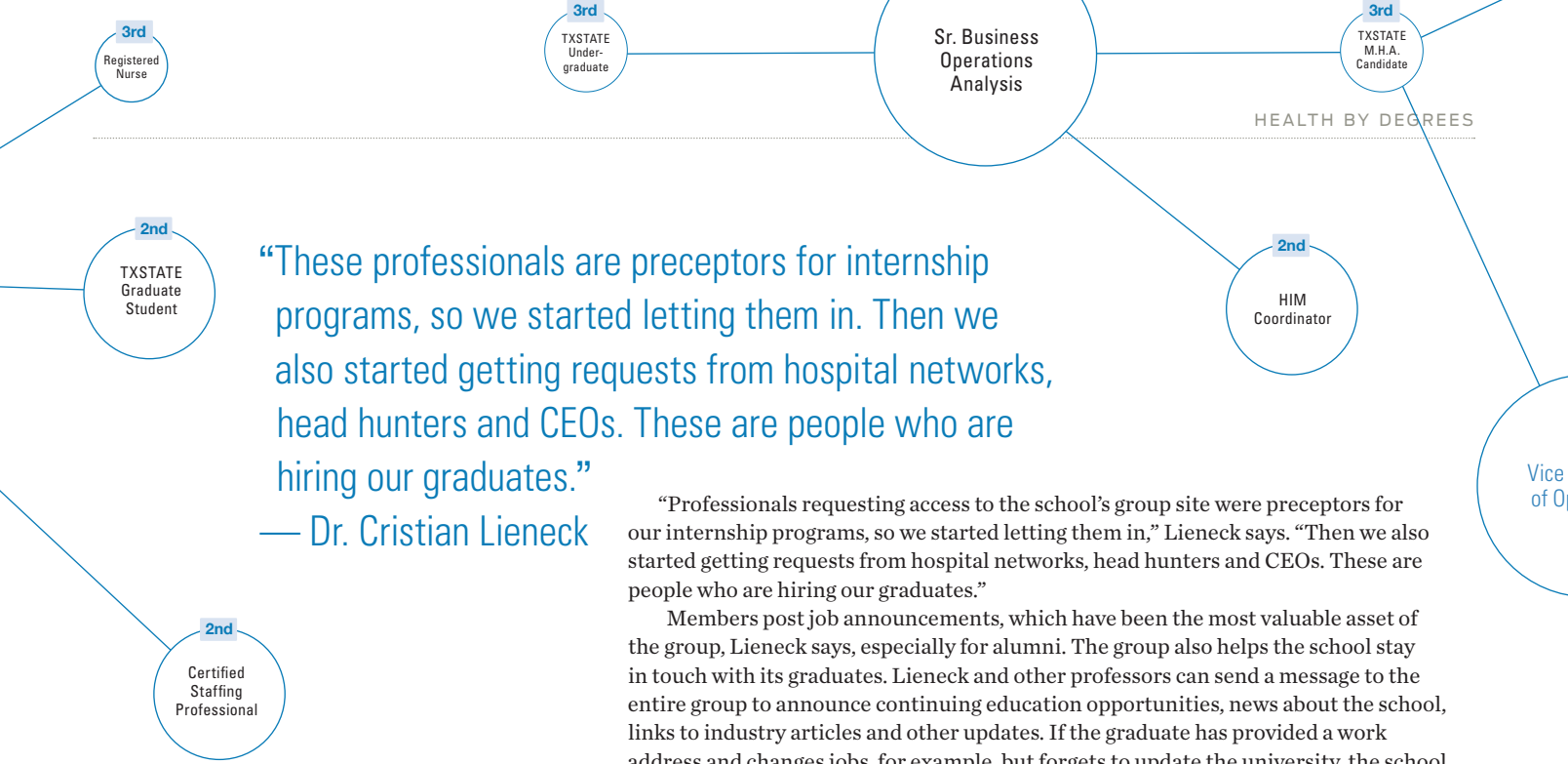
By Ashley Festa



Few professors commit lecture time to discussing personal social media accounts, but Dr. Cristian Lieneck makes it required study for healthcare marketing classes. Besides teaching students to market an organization's health services, Lieneck emphasizes the necessity of creating a personal brand to promote themselves. The social networking site LinkedIn forms the foundation for their brand.

"I tell them that they're always on stage," says Lieneck, assistant professor in the Texas State School of Health Administration. "How they market themselves, how they act in public, and their appearance on social media like LinkedIn – all that matters. It's not Facebook; it's a professional networking site."

He assigns a LinkedIn project for his students: create an account, populate the fields, upload a professional photo and write a detailed promotional LinkedIn profile and current position statement. Students are required to connect with relevant groups and industry professionals, as well as join the private Texas State School of Health Administration group. The group has more than 740 members since it was created in 2012, and they're not just students. Members also include alumni, professors, prospective students and business professionals who want to know more about what Texas State is doing for the healthcare industry.



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— Dr. Cristian Lieneck

**www.LinkedIn.com**  
Texas State University School  
of Health Administration

“Professionals requesting access to the school’s group site were preceptors for our internship programs, so we started letting them in,” Lieneck says. “Then we also started getting requests from hospital networks, head hunters and CEOs. These are people who are hiring our graduates.”

Members post job announcements, which have been the most valuable asset of the group, Lieneck says, especially for alumni. The group also helps the school stay in touch with its graduates. Lieneck and other professors can send a message to the entire group to announce continuing education opportunities, news about the school, links to industry articles and other updates. If the graduate has provided a work address and changes jobs, for example, but forgets to update the university, the school no longer has a way to keep in touch and share valuable information. With LinkedIn, alumni are never lost in cyberspace.

The School of Health Administration offers big benefits for alumni to stay connected. “We’re continuously using the site to blast out events,” Lieneck says. “We’re right in the middle of two large healthcare markets, Austin and San Antonio. There are lots of professional associations and always continuing education opportunities at the local and state level.”

“We’re posting events they might not be aware of if they don’t visit our website,” says Dr. Matthew Brooks, director for the School of Health Administration. “We try to get members involved with campus events and keep them updated about new positions and new degrees.” Brooks also hopes to build up alumni groups across the nation so Texas State’s Health Administration graduates can connect at events and conferences all over the United States.

Amber Rankin, a 2013 master’s graduate, uses LinkedIn daily to check for updates and connect with healthcare professionals at other companies. “I use the group for possible future career opportunities,” she says. “If I see someone who works in the same division or same department, I’ll message them and ask, ‘Who can I reach out to about this?’”

That strategy has worked for her. When she applied to a new position, she checked LinkedIn and realized she was already connected to someone in the same department. That connection provided the name of a manager, and she got in touch. “He gave me some pointers,” she recalls. “It’s a lot better to talk to someone directly than waiting for someone to reach out to you.”

Beyond alumni, the school also uses the group as a recruitment tool. When potential students send a request to join, they’re able to see activities going on at Texas State as well as important industry professionals connected to the group.

As for current students, Lieneck encourages new users to connect with healthcare organizations and institutions such as The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and other large health systems, especially where they might be interested in doing an internship or residency. Students are then able to discover more about the organization before they apply. The Health Administration group site benefits everyone involved – from prospects to alumni, as well as the university.

“People are communicating and networking professionally with each other, people who didn’t know each other before the group site happened,” Lieneck says. “My undergraduates are linking up with alumni who might be employed by an organization where the new grad wants to work. We’re working to strengthen that alumni chain.” 🌟