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[Home](#) » [Business](#)

## UWM class helps FBI recruit thousands of job applicants

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Sam Hogerton

A sign on the UWM campus advertises FBI jobs. The federal agency went ahead with recruitment efforts, with the help of students in a public relations class, despite a deluge of applicants.

Dave the Hand, a mass communications student in a hand costume, has been running around the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus this month urging students to apply for jobs with the FBI.

The deadline is Thursday, so you still have time to apply online. That's the good news.

The bad news: There are 227,000 people ahead of you, in line for 2,800 Federal Bureau of Investigation jobs across the country.

"A lot of it is a function of the economy," said Special Agent Peter Reneau, who is in charge of the recruiting effort for the Milwaukee office. "That puts us in a situation where we can be very selective."

The FBI is looking for about 850 special agents this year. The majority of the jobs are in professional support roles, where the agency needs people with language, business, science and information-technology skills.

Its getting the word out on campus by employing the ingenuity of

college students themselves.

The bureau contracts annually through a third-party agency with six college classes that create recruiting campaigns for FBI jobs. This year, instructor Becky Crowder's strategic communications campaigns class at UWM was among the six chosen by Edventures Partners for the FBI work. The students, most of them seniors, went through the same exercise that a professional communications firm would use to do the job.

Working with a budget of \$2,500, the 12 students conducted surveys and convened focus groups to get information before they decided on an approach.

At other times, the thought of applying for an FBI job might have conjured up visions of intrigue, excitement and guys in suits talking to their lapels.

Not now.

### Seeking job security

Based on the responses from students about their priorities for a job, the UWM recruiting campaign emphasizes job security, peace of mind and benefits.

"They know friends who graduated last year who don't have a job," Crowder explained.

The campaign aims to make students aware of the majority of the FBI jobs that are available in support roles.

Crowder's classes in past years have worked on projects for Edventures, but this is the first time that UWM has been chosen for the FBI recruiting drive, Reneau said. UWM was attractive to the FBI because the university teaches the critical skills that the agency is seeking, and it's an urban school, he said.

"The point of the whole campaign is to produce quality over quantity," Crowder said. "They have plenty of quantity, but they don't have what they wanted us to deliver. We are definitely on track and we're getting those quality résumés."

The FBI pays well, Reneau said. Special agents, for example, start at \$64,000 per year and can reach \$100,000 in five years.

Despite the onslaught of applicants, Reneau said the agency wasn't just going through the motions with this year's campus recruiting efforts.

"We can't really stop the process," he said, adding that testing and background checks would quickly eliminate many of the contenders for the jobs.

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