Recent Grads Exhibit Mixed Feelings on Their College, Career Experiences

While most four-year college graduates of the last few years say they’re happy they completed a bachelor’s degree, many are struggling to find jobs in their chosen fields—or are less than satisfied with the jobs they did land after college, according to a recent study by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

The study—entitled Unfulfilled Expectations: Recent College Graduates Struggle in a Troubled Economy—surveyed 571 U.S. residents who graduated from a four-year college/university between 2006 and 2010. Its goal: “to better understand the articulation between [graduates’] formal education and their initial positions in the workforce.”

Almost three-quarters of the grads surveyed said they have no second thoughts about their decision to attend college—believing that their degree is as valuable as they thought it would be, and saying their college experiences prepared them to be successful in their first jobs.

But there is plenty of discontent as well, the study reveals. To wit:

Half of the survey participants are working in jobs that don’t require a bachelor’s degree, yet 62 percent say they’ll need even more formal education if they’re to be successful in their chosen career.

Between one-quarter and one-third of the survey respondents said they made “significant accommodations” to get their first jobs—for example, they took a job that pays less than what they expected to earn, or they accepted a job outside their area of interest.

About half of the respondents said that they personally won’t do as well financially as their parents have done, and 56 percent said their generation as a whole won’t do as well as their parents’ generation has done.

Among the study’s other key findings:

Forty-eight percent of the respondents said they wish they’d been more careful about selecting their college major, and 47 percent said they wish they’d gotten more internship and/or part-time job experience during their college years.

Nearly 6 in 10 (58 percent) of the study respondents said their campus career centers didn’t do a good job of preparing them to look for work.

Sources: Unfulfilled Expectations: Recent College Graduates Struggle in a Troubled Economy, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, May 2011; Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey news release, May 23, 2011.
IN THE NEWS

Wait-It-Out Strategy Appeals to Many New College Grads

Some soon-to-be and new college graduates are facing the dicey entry-level job market by deciding not to actually face it for a while, according to a recent article in The Wall Street Journal.

Among college grads under the age of 25, the article notes, “the labor force participation rate—which measures the proportion working or seeking employment—[has fallen] by three percentage points over the past four years.”

Graduate school is one obvious factor in this phenomenon. But career services professionals say that in the last two years, they’ve seen more new graduates travel, volunteer, or take unpaid internships instead of jumping into the already highly competitive entry-level job market.

“There’s a lot of moving in with parents, waiting it out, and thinking about grad school,” says Lawrence Katz, an economist at Harvard University (MA).

“It’s become more extreme given how this recession has been.”

Twenty-two-year-old Adrian Avedisian graduated recently from Mount Holyoke College (MA) with a degree in Arabic language and culture. Eventually, she’d like to work for a start-up company somewhere in the Middle East. But for now, she’s living with her mother in Florida, waiting for a few months to begin her job search in earnest.

“Everyone is talking about how difficult it’s going to be to get a job,” she says. “If that’s how the competition is, I feel like there’s no use wasting my time.”


Drop in Number of Unpaid Internships Worries Some

Companies/organizations around the United States are being more careful these days when it comes to offering unpaid internships—a phenomenon that, according to some experts, is leading to a worrisome narrowing of internship opportunities for college students and recent grads.

Specifically: Some companies and organizations that used to offer unpaid internships are dropping them completely (instead of turning them into paid opportunities, for example).

While that’s not always a bad thing—some organizations do treat their unpaid interns as free labor, after all, and nothing more—overreaction isn’t the answer either, according to Phil Gardner, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University.

“I know that there’s people out there who want to get rid of all unpaid internships,” says Gardner. “But there’s going to be cases where we have some very viable ones with nonprofits, with small start-up businesses, and we have to keep people engaged in these businesses.”

Case in point: Edison State College (FL) student Chrystian Quinones, who talked his way into an unpaid internship with a Fort Myers granite company and turned it into a full-time paying job after several months of impressive work.

Quinones admits that he struggled to keep up with his intern duties, his classes, and his paying job activities during his internship with the granite company.

“But,” he quickly adds, “it paid off.”


Asking to Negotiate About Salary Could Be a Bit Risky

To negotiate or not to negotiate: That is the question most new college graduates face when they’re offered a job even in the best of labor markets.

But what about now, as we (slowly) come out of the worst recession in recent memory? Is this the best time for students/grads to seek an extra few thousand dollars a year in starting salary?

Some New Grads Survive— Barely—by Taking Several Jobs

While many recent college grads are struggling to find their first “real” jobs in this economy, some are wrestling with the opposite issue (of sorts): holding down multiple part-time jobs that, together, still don’t pay enough to cover the bills.

Twenty-three-year-old Mia Branco, for example, graduated with a degree in musical theater from American University (DC) in 2009. She has four jobs at the moment, which in a good month net her about $1,300 in total income. She feels lucky to be working at all, though.

“My willingness to have a hodgepodge schedule makes me more marketable.”

IN THE NEWS

“Employers these days are feeling a little bit of entitlement,” says Robert Orndorff, associate director of career services at Pennsylvania State University.

In other words, students/grads need to use some caution—and some common sense—in their deliberations about whether to negotiate their salaries ... or not.

Zhenya Yoder, manager of global compensation at Bechtel Corp. (CA), says she rarely sees recent college grads attempt to negotiate their starting salaries. If they do, she says, “We’ll listen to what the potential hire has to say.”

But, as is the case at many companies, Bechtel’s starting salaries for new college graduates are competitive with those of other organizations in the engineering field—making it very unlikely that the company would go along with a negotiated starting salary increase.

John Challenger, CEO of Chicago outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas, says students/grads who want more money but don’t want to negotiate about starting salary can instead ask a potential employer if he/she would be willing to reconsider salary six months down the road.

“Get the job, go to work, and prove yourself,” Challenger says. “Then ask for a raise because of your track record.”


What Really Causes Entry-Level Jobs to Go Unfilled?

How is it that entry-level jobs can go unfilled in an American economy with an unemployment rate of roughly 9 percent?

Some experts say that employers aren’t as willing as they once were to train new college grads and other entry-level job candidates.

“In the ‘60s and ‘70s, you could go from an entry-level job on the loading dock to manufacturing engineer or accountant to maybe a manager in a corner office,” says Anthony Carnevale, director of the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University (DC).

“It doesn’t work that way anymore. ... [Employers] don’t want to take five years to get you ready. They want you ready to start working—and learning—the day you walk in the door.”

Other labor market experts say colleges and universities—and their students—shoulder much of the blame for the unfilled jobs phenomenon.

“We’ve got too many Americans taking guaranteed loans and going to college and majoring in philosophy or sociology, [then] graduating $100,000 in debt with no real marketable skills,” says Peter Schiff, head of investment firm Euro Pacific Capital.

Source: MSNBC.com web site, June 24, 2011.

Unemployed ‘10, ‘09 Grads Face Financial Hit Long Term

Members of the college classes of 2010 and 2009 who haven’t yet landed an entry-level job in their chosen field face difficulties that go far beyond the immediate term, according to a recent article in Canada’s Financial Post.

Specifically, grads of the last two years who aren’t yet working in their fields of interest will in many cases suffer a financial compensation hit that can take decades to overcome.

“It is very costly for young people to have trouble getting started on their careers,” says Peter Diamond, an economics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“You learn a lot on the job when you’re young, both in literal skills and [in] relationship to work. What you’re taking away [from recent grads who don’t land jobs in their fields] is that pattern of growth—and when they come in [to their chosen field] later, they don’t adequately catch up.”

Source: Financial Post, June 17, 2011.
### GOOD IDEAS

**Outreach Effort Aims to Generate at Least 250 New Internships**

The career center at Loyola University Maryland has teamed up with several other offices on campus to proactively solicit at least 250 internship opportunities from Loyola alumni, parents, and friends. The Internship Challenge launched in 2009 “in response to the tough economic times,” says Jennifer Rowley, assistant director and internship coordinator for the career center.

“Students were finding it increasingly difficult to secure internships,” Rowley notes. Employers with Loyola ties who want to take part in the Internship Challenge fill out a special online form to complete a profile and submit their internship opportunities.

Inspired by this ancient example of collegiality, the career center at Kalamazoo College (MI) has created The Guilds of Kalamazoo College—LinkedIn-based groups through which alums and others offer online and in-person mentoring, job search or grad school application tips, externship and internship opportunities in their organizations, and connections to professional networks and entry-level positions, according to Joan Hawxhurst, director of the Center for Career and Professional Development at the college.

So far, five “charter Guilds” have been created:

- Business
- Health
- Law
- Sustainability
- Justice and Peace

“The Guilds foster mentoring relationships in which professional ‘masters’ share their experience, knowledge, and connections with student ‘apprentices,’” says Hawxhurst.

Each Guild is a LinkedIn subgroup of a common “Guilds of Kalamazoo College” general group.

So far, nearly 700 Kalamazoo students, alumni, and others have joined the Guilds.

**“Makeover” Contest Gives Students the Winning Look**

Sometimes, students just don’t have the money to buy, say, a nice suit for interviews. Other times, students may simply lack knowledge about how they can look their very best when they meet with prospective employers.

That’s why the career center at Missouri University of Science & Technology recently sponsored “Extreme Makeover: Career Edition,” a contest in which two winning students—one male, one female—received professional makeovers right before the school’s spring career fair.

Students could nominate either themselves or fellow students for the contest—by writing a short essay describing why they (or another student) deserved an Extreme Makeover.

The winners were selected by career center staffers and got makeover services from several local establishments:

- J.C. Penney of Rolla (for new suits, shirts, and a tie)
- Shoe Sensation of Rolla (for new professional shoes)
- Forum Dental of Rolla (for Zoom Whitening of teeth)
- Il Bacio Day Spa and Salon of Rolla (for hair and make-up)

The winning students also received a professional briefcase from the campus bookstore, as well as an intensive resume critique, a practice interview session, and business cards from the campus career center.

“Both of our winners were incredibly grateful,” says Adrienne Neckermann, assistant director for student employment at the career center.

**“Academy” Focuses Students on Future Careers from Day 1**

The MBC Career Academy at Mary Baldwin College (VA) gives participating students the chance to focus on essential career development tasks starting on Day 1 of their college experience—and lasting throughout their entire college careers if they so choose.
One of nine “Leadership Gateways” at the college, the Career Academy begins with freshman orientation the week before classes get under way in the fall, according to Julie Chappell, director of career development services at the school.

After that, she says, the Academy students continue to meet weekly throughout the fall semester, led by faculty advisors and career development staffers. They also enroll in a spring-semester course called “Taking Your Liberal Arts to Work” and attend activities of the college’s “Successful Women Series,” in which MBC alums talk about their college-to-career journeys.

“The students also set goals through participation in assessment and exploration activities,” Chappell notes, “and by starting an Individual Career and Life Plan. The ICLP, as it is known, is a four-phase plan that gives students guidance for professional development throughout their college career.”

Each year, between 50 and 60 new students—roughly 20 percent of the incoming class—sign up for the Career Academy.

**GOOD IDEAS**

Birds of a feather really do flock together at the University of Alberta.

The school’s career center is simply helping the process along through its *Birds of a Feather* program, an initiative that connects students with U of A faculty members who are interested in the same topics of research (or potential research, as the case may be).

The program is a series of panel discussions that encourage students to get involved in undergraduate research with faculty members, according to Alexis Lockwood, experiential learning coordinator for the U of A Career Centre.

“These panels of student researchers, alumni/ae, and professors share tips and advice on how undergraduates can get started doing research in their fields of interest, as well as specific avenues for doing so,” Lockwood says.

Two discussions have been held since Birds of a Feather began in late 2010. The first focused on research in the social sciences and featured two student researchers, two alums who had participated in undergraduate research, and two professors who supervise undergraduate researchers.

The second panel targeted the natural sciences and was made up of faculty members from six different academic departments on campus.

The program has already sparked an “exciting offshoot,” Lockwood notes—a new, campuswide Undergraduate Research Initiative that will match interested students with specific undergraduate research opportunities.

**Group Offers Job Seekers Diverse Sources of Support**

The Job Support Group at Marylhurst University (OR) thrives for two key reasons, according to Maureen Muldoon, job support and outreach coordinator for the school’s career center.

For starters, the group is open not only to Marylhurst students and alums, but also members of the local community, whether they have an affiliation with the university or not. Result: A diversity of experiences to learn from.

Just as importantly, though, the group helps demystify the job search process—especially for participants who are looking for their first “real” jobs, or those who haven’t looked for a job in years.

“The group tends to draw in those who aren’t necessarily on the fast track, but rather those who know that reinventing themselves will ultimately be the way they find work in the future,” Muldoon says.

“Our job seekers report feeling emotional support and feeling safe when they attend the group.”

The group meets weekly and draws about 20 participants, on average.
Question Helps Students See How to Present Strengths with Confidence

Each month, we interview a career counselor about a tool or technique he/she uses to effectively address a career development issue. Consider adding this one to your own bag of tricks.

The Career Counselor: Roberta Muir, Career Counselor for the University of South Florida’s Career Center.

The Tool/Technique: An interview preparation technique that asks students an attitude-shifting question: “If you and your best friend were competing for the same job, would you want your friend to be hired—or yourself?”

Why did you come up with the “would you want yourself or your best friend hired?” technique?

I actually got the idea while working with a student who came in for assistance with interview preparation. Apparently he and another student—with whom he was good friends—had applied for the same position at the same company.

I asked the student what his concerns were so that I could focus on meeting his perceived needs. He explained how much he wanted the position, and we discussed interview questions he might expect and how he planned to answer them.

At one point in our session, he said that, unlike his friend, he found it hard to talk about himself. He also mentioned that his attention to detail and other skills were probably better than his friend’s. But he still expected his friend to have a better chance of getting the position.

So I asked him who he’d rather see get the job: himself or his friend. Since he really wanted the job, I definitely had his attention once I’d asked him this question.

How does the “would you want yourself or your best friend hired?” technique work?

Since many students haven’t competed for a professional position before, they often believe that interviewing is just talking about themselves. They frequently don’t have a clue that having a strategy is a key element for success. Students who are more introverted, or who see talking about their strengths as boastful, admittedly are at a disadvantage.

Providing interview prep assistance in this case meant helping the student see that he had already articulated his strengths to me, so surely he could do it again. So I simply asked the student to repeat what he had said just moments earlier, but this time as if I were the decision maker.

The essential thing when it comes to this technique is having the student identify his/her own concerns and then talking through those concerns with him/her. Dialoguing isn’t as scary to students as the thought of the interview is—and, as we know, fear can be paralyzing.

So when a student reveals the issues he/she is most anxious about, it’s easy for a trained counselor to assist with information and to coach an approach that the student probably hasn’t considered previously.

What are the key outcomes of using this technique with students?

Students are frequently engaged in a lot of negative self-talk. This approach helps provide them with new, constructive thoughts.

It’s amazing to see the confidence boost that comes from such a small detail!

Often, students impress themselves with how much better prepared they are to handle the interview by just thinking about something a bit differently. It makes me smile. I always tell them, “Go forth and do great things!”

Then they smile.
EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Yes, You Do Want to “Make Copies”—Because It Will Lead to Bigger Things

Each month, we interview an employer about a key career issue college students—and career services professionals—need to better understand ... from the employer’s perspective.

The Employer: Nancy Barry, Gen Y expert and author of When Reality Hits: What Employers Want Recent College Graduates to Know.

The Issue: A new grad’s willingness to do grunt work—with a smile—garners respect that leads to opportunities later.

In your book When Reality Hits, you offer the following advice to new college grads: “You may be thinking, ‘I’m not making copies. That’s where I draw the line.’ Don’t draw the line until you understand why you’ll want to be the one to make the copies.” What do you mean?

A lot of recent grads enter the workforce with an entitlement attitude. They act as though just because they earned their diploma they will never have to get their hands dirty again. This attitude is driving employers crazy and giving the younger generation a bad reputation.

What’s interesting is that a lot of college students and recent grads don’t even realize they have an entitlement attitude. So they need to be reminded that when they enter the workforce, they’re part of a team that must work together to get the job done.

There will be days when, as a recent grad, you’re asked to do something and you may think, “You want me to do what?” My advice is to smile and say, “I’ll be more than happy to do that.”

What can recent grads do to demonstrate to employers that they are willing to “make copies” (i.e., do the less-than-glamorous but still essential tasks that are part of every job)?

Focus on becoming a “go-to” person—someone who has a positive attitude, follows through on commitments, sees everything as an opportunity, and is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

When you become a go-to person, you stand out in the crowd. Managers love working with you and you end up being assigned some of the best projects. The more you do, the more you get to do.

I tell a story in my book about becoming a go-to person for the publisher of The Dallas Morning News early in my career with the company. As a result of working with him on special projects that were outside of my normal responsibilities, I was promoted to vice president three years after I joined the company.

Bottom line: When you become known as a go-to person early in your career, wonderful things can happen.

What can Campus Career Counselor readers do to effectively address this issue with the students/grads they work with?

Stress to your students the importance of the “soft skills” (professional image, strong work ethic, positive attitude, business etiquette savvy, etc.). A college degree will help students land their first job, but to be successful in life and in work, young adults must have a solid set of soft skills.

In a perfect world, all colleges/universities would offer a Careers 101 course to help students successfully transition into the workforce.

One other thing: As I speak to young adults across the country, I’ve found that when we take the time to explain to them not only what is important but also why it’s important, they rise to the occasion every time. Gen Y is amazing and has a lot to offer employers. They just need someone to share what they’ve learned along the way about what it takes to be successful.


One of Nancy’s passions is helping young adults be successful in their careers. She has the opportunity to speak to college students across the country and helps her corporate clients get their young professionals off to a great start.

Nancy’s other passion is helping business leaders understand Gen Y—who they are, what they want, and how to manage them. She also offers presentations to help business leaders create an environment filled with open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration when they have all four generations working together.

Prior to launching her own company in 2005, Nancy served as vice president of community services for The Dallas Morning News and WFAA-TV. She is a member of the National Association of Colleges and Employers as well as the National Speakers Association.

www.nancybarry.com
Dig This Gig

Review by Peter Vogt

_Dig This Gig_ is, in many ways, a testament to the value of informational interviewing, and a sort of implicit demonstration of how to do it well by asking thoughtful questions of the right people.

In the book, author Laura Dodd features the brief stories of more than two dozen of her fellow twentysomethings, each of whom she has interviewed at length to learn about their careers.

Dodd’s goal in writing the book was both simple and laudable: She wanted to hear the “unvarnished voices” (p. xvi) of the Millennial Generation, speaking about their jobs openly and frankly so that today’s college students would have a true glimpse of what careers (the careers covered in the book, at least) are really like—not to mention the characteristics that lead to success in those particular jobs.

The book is a little like Studs Terkel’s classic _Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do_, though it’s less a psychological examination and more a fact-finding and advice-gathering exercise.

Dodd describes 28 different jobs in all, organizing them into seven broad categories ranging from “Healthcare Gigs” and “Entertainment Gigs” to “Do-Good Gigs” and “Green Gigs.”

Each of the profiles in _Dig This Gig_ is intriguing. Dodd is a capable storyteller, as are the people she’s interviewed, which results in a book that is not only eye opening but is also just plain fun to read.

Dodd even includes a short “Postscript” with each profile, asking the interviewees to answer four revealing questions (ones your students may want to incorporate into their own informational interviews, by the way):

“If I had to do it all over again, I would ...”

“If I knew then what I know now, I would ...”

“Three characteristics or personality traits you need to do this job:”

“Don’t even try this if ...”

Like other books of this genre, _Dig This Gig_ is necessarily limited in its coverage. So it’s very possible that a given college student/grad will find no careers in the book that interest him/her.

It’s a chance worth taking, because _some_ of your students will undoubtedly find themselves—perhaps for the first time—in the book’s pages.

The Best Advice I Ever Got

Review by Peter Vogt

The dozen or so diamonds in _The Best Advice I Ever Got_ make up for the fluff you have to tolerate along the way.

CBS News anchor Katie Couric serves as a sort of curator for dozens of contributors, some of whom have clearly phoned it in.

Thankfully, though, several of the contributors have put in the effort to offer what-matters-most career observations that you can incorporate into, say, counseling sessions or discussions in a career class.

Examples:

Comedian Bill Cosby offers a first-hand account of the dangers of trying to be something—someone—you’re not in your career.

_New York Times_ columnist Thomas Friedman argues how “do what you love” isn’t “sappy career advice but an absolute survival strategy.”

Musician Alicia Keys describes the question she uses to evaluate crucial career decisions: “Would you still do it if you’d never see a dime from it?”
Each month, we highlight several low- or no-cost resources you can use yourself, pass along to the students or recent graduates you work with, or both.

**Passion Is Not “a Luxury That Needs to Be Jettisoned”**

A recent article on the web site of *The Atlantic* magazine encourages new college graduates to follow their passions, even—perhaps even most importantly—when the economy is less than stellar.

In the piece, author and entrepreneur Lane Wallace notes that “passion is all about commitment.”

“In other words, passion is not a luxury that needs to be jettisoned in tough economic times,” says Wallace. “It is the most essential force a person can bring to a challenging job market.”


**Web Site Describes Career Options in Animal Control**

The National Animal Control Association devotes a portion of its web site to describing career possibilities in the animal control field.

The “Job Opportunities in Animal Control” section of the site highlights job titles in three subsectors: field operations, shelter operations, and community/office operations. It also—impressively—discusses not only the positives of working in the field, but also the negatives.

To learn more, visit: www.nacanet.org/careeropps.html.

**Social Media Activities Can Harm Your Job Search Too**

Social networking could easily become “the graveyard of [one’s] job search,” according to Denver executive coach John Heckers.

Heckers illustrates his point quite persuasively—and offers some uncommonly found advice as well—in “Top 10 Ways Social Networking Can Kill Your Job Search,” a recent article on the web site of *Colorado Biz* magazine.

Among Heckers’s tips: Be careful with political commentary; use caution when it comes to highlighting your hobbies (especially those that might be viewed as overly risky); and watch how open you are with your organizational memberships.


**Article Enlightens College Grads on Entrepreneurship**

A recent article on the *DailyFinance* web site (produced by AOL) is one you’ll want to refer to next time you work with a student/alum who is interested in starting his/her own business.


It also encourages budding entrepreneurs to conduct their own unique form of informational interviews—not with working professionals in established companies but, instead, with successful entrepreneurs.


(Note: The URL above really does end with the letter “f”!)

**Handouts Highlight Career Settings for Drama Therapists**

The National Association for Drama Therapy has produced a series of fact sheets that will give college students a sense of the settings where they might pursue careers in drama therapy.

The PDF handouts cover drama therapy with addiction populations; with children and adolescents; in correctional and forensic settings; and with geriatric populations.


**A Dozen Ways to Turn Econ Skills into a Satisfying Career**

The web site of the National Association for Business Economics features a dozen profiles of professionals working in economics (and economics-related) jobs.

Salary Predictions of College Women, Men Differ Markedly

Millennial-Generation women who graduate from college today tend to have lower expectations than their male counterparts when it comes to key career issues like starting salaries, according to a study to be published in Industrial Relations.

The study analyzed the survey responses of more than 23,000 Canadian university students who were asked about their salary expectations and career priorities.

One key finding: The women in the study predicted starting salaries that were about 14 percent less than those the men in the study predicted for themselves.

Moreover, when the women and men in the study were asked to predict their salaries five years into their careers, the women’s prediction was, on average, 18 percent less than the men’s prediction.

“It’s a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation,” says Sean Lyons, a University of Guelph (Ontario) professor who co-authored the study.

“Women know that they currently aren’t earning as much as men, so they enter the workforce with that expectation,” Lyons says. “Because they don’t expect to earn as much, they likely aren’t as aggressive when it comes to negotiating salaries or pay raises and will accept lower-paying jobs than men, which perpetuates the existing inequalities.”

Lyons says college women need accurate salary information before they pursue their job searches so that “they think differently about the way they value themselves relative to their male colleagues.”

Source: University of Guelph (Ontario) news release, May 19, 2011.

New Grads Put Work/Life Balance at Top of Wish List

The job market for soon-to-be and new college graduates may be on the difficult side, but work/life balance still tops their list of career priorities, according to a recent study by web site AfterCollege.com.

In the study—which questioned 1,450 college students and recent grads from around the United States—the participants were asked to rate the most important factors they consider when choosing a job.

Topping the list: work/life balance, with an average score of 3.85 on a scale of 1 (most important) to 12 (least important).

Salary (4.00) trailed close behind, followed by geographic location (4.44), benefits (5.52), and company/organization reputation (5.73).

Conversely, sign-on bonuses (8.94) and relocation assistance (8.57) were the least important considerations in the survey respondents’ minds.

The study also asked participants to assess their schools’ career centers/services. The verdict (among the 1,389 respondents who answered the question): a split decision of sorts. Specifically:

37.2 percent of the respondents said their campus career centers were “helpful” (31.7 percent) or “exceptional” (5.5 percent).

33.5 percent said their career centers were “OK, but need improvement.”

11.5 percent said their career centers were “poor.”

17.8 percent said they’d never used their career centers.


Three-Quarters of Companies Plan to Hire New Graduates

Three out of four companies plan to hire new college graduates for entry-level jobs this year, and 23 percent will hire more new grads this year than last, according to a recent study conducted by EMC Research and commissioned by the Academy of Art University (CA).
Loan Debt Influences Career Choices of New College Grads

Two-thirds of recent college graduates who have student loans to repay say their debt will have an influence on the job they take or the career they pursue. That's just one of the key findings from a recent Capital One Financial Corporation study that questioned about 400 new and recent grads throughout the United States.

Majority of Arts Graduates Like Their Career Path So Far

Most college grads who majored in an arts-related discipline are employed in the arts in positions that are consistent with their goals, according to a recent study by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) at Indiana University.

The study involved more than 13,500 alumni/ae of arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and college/university arts departments and schools. Among its key findings: 92 percent of the respondents who want to work currently are working, with most finding employment soon after graduation.

Moreover, two-thirds of the survey respondents said their first post-graduation jobs were a close match for the type of work they wanted. And almost three-quarters (74 percent) of those who had intended to work as professional artists have done so at some point since graduation.

“Artistic careers exemplify new ways of working in the growing contingent economy, and the experiences of artists might increasingly become the norm for many 21st-century workers.” says Steven Tepper, a senior scholar for SNAAP.

**Study: “Getting a Degree Matters, but What You Take Matters More”**

In strictly financial terms, a bachelor’s degree in any discipline offers a good return on investment—on average. But some majors pay off a lot more than others do, suggests a recent study by the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University (DC).

*What’s It Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors* is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2009 American Community Survey (ACS). For the first time, the Census Bureau asked ACS participants with a bachelor’s degree or higher to share what their undergraduate major was in college.

Those responses were then coded and collapsed by the Census Bureau into 171 different majors in 15 categories. The study’s key finding: While all undergraduate majors are “worth it”—even taking into account the cost of college and lost (potential) earnings during one’s time in college—the lifetime earnings advantage for college graduates ranges from $241,000 for education majors to just under $1.1 million for engineering majors.

“The bottom line is that getting a degree matters, but what you take matters more,” says Anthony Carnevale, director of the Center on Education and the Workforce.

The study found that petroleum engineering graduates (median of $120,000), pharmacy grads ($105,000), and mathematics and computer sciences grads ($98,000) have the highest annual earnings, while counseling/psychology grads ($29,000) and early childhood education grads ($36,000) have the lowest.

**Sources:** Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce news release, May 24, 2011; *What’s It Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, May 2011.

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**PETE’S COLUMN**

**Wisdom on the Coffee Shop Wall**

By Peter Vogt

My wife, Lois, and I have spent a great deal of time the last few weeks—16 of 28 days by our informal count—at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where Lois continues to receive top-notch care/treatment for cancer.

During one of our recent trips, we were cooling our heels in the Caribou Coffee shop adjacent to the clinic. I glanced up from my lunch and saw a chalkboard on the wall, which invited Caribou guests to “Share Your Dreams.”

I was amazed—though not terribly surprised—by some of the poignant goals people revealed. Among them:

- “Become what I was meant to be!”
- “To own my own bakery!”
- “Live my life to the fullest and not care what people think! : )”
- “To not be judged” (which included a big-toothed smiley face that I can’t reproduce here).

There are many hidden—albeit unexpected and even a bit strange—blessings of dealing with a serious illness. One of them is that it clarifies your thinking on what matters in life. The gunk that usually clogs your brain seems to wash away (if only temporarily)—leaving you with a clear picture of what you *really* value.