Hopeful News in *Recruiting Trends* Study Demands a Degree of Caution

You’ll want to keep two key concepts in mind as you’re digesting the results of Michigan State University’s new *Recruiting Trends 2010-2011* report on this year’s college hiring environment: caution and context.

Yes, overall hiring of new college graduates is predicted to rise 3 percent this academic year—which includes an increase of about 10 percent at the bachelor’s-degree level. But hiring is expected to fall for new grads with associate’s (-6 percent), master’s (-2 percent), and especially professional (-13 percent) degrees.

Moreover, the report notes, “[C]ollege hiring growth is being generated by only a small group of organizations (approximately 350 to 400) [that] have separated themselves from the rest of the pack” (p. 5). Those organizations fall into two “highly optimistic cohorts”:

- Large companies hiring for jobs that have been open for several years.
- Fast-growing and small companies hiring for new positions.

Take this group of companies out of the broader college employment picture and hiring at the bachelor’s-degree level “would remain relatively flat for a second year,” notes Phil Gardner, longtime principal investigator for the *Recruiting Trends* study and director of MSU’s Collegiate Employment Research Institute.

Here’s a quick rundown of some of the other intriguing findings from the study, which this year surveyed about 4,600 employers from across the United States.

**Employers’ Hiring Plans**

Thirty-two percent of employers (compared with 27 percent last year) have definite plans to hire new college graduates this academic year, and another 20 percent have preliminary hiring targets that include new grads.

Conversely, 35 percent of employers (compared with 42 percent last year) said they’re uncertain about their college hiring plans for 2010-2011, while 13 percent said they wouldn’t be hiring any new graduates.

“Even with definite and preliminary plans to hire, it cannot be assumed that employers will be increasing their number of hires over last year,” Gardner stresses.

“Across all degree levels, it appears that approximately 35 percent to 45 percent of employers will be increasing their hiring targets from last year. However, slightly more will be decreasing the number of hires this year compared to last.”

**“Any Major” Gains Clout**

An all-time high of 36 percent of employers said they would consider hiring new college graduates from any major—

“*Recruiting Trends*” continued on page 12
Restaurant Industry Draws Increasing Career Interest

The restaurant business is hiring—and that’s attracting the attention of a growing number of college students and recent graduates who see the industry not as a stopgap form of short-term employment but, rather, as a permanent career option, according to a recent article in the Los Angeles Times.

“We are seeing more applicants coming to us not only for the hourly jobs, but for the management programs that we have,” says Mike Mirkil, a spokesman for Habit Restaurants Inc., an Irvine, California-based company that owns more than 30 Habit Burger restaurants.

“There are more people now who are really looking at the restaurant industry as a means for a career path.”

Several factors are fueling the trend. One of them: It’s tough, if not impossible, to outsource restaurant work.

“You can’t serve restaurant meals from Shanghai,” says economist Edward Learner, director of UCLA Anderson Forecast at the University of California-Los Angeles.

On a related note, restaurant stock prices are rising significantly. McDonald’s, for instance, is up by a third from this time last year, and several other chains are doing even better.

“The economy has recovered a little bit, and people want to eat out,” says Jack Russo, senior consumer analyst for Edward Jones Investments.


Cooled-Down Nursing Market Is Temporary, Experts Say

The job market for new college graduates going into nursing—once thought to be a “recession-proof” career—has cooled, but experts in the field say the slowdown is temporary, notes a recent article in The Commercial Appeal of Memphis (TN).

Moreover, industry insiders say, the drop in demand for new nurses needs to be viewed in context.

New data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing show that graduates of entry-level baccalaureate (BSN) and master’s nursing programs are still much more likely to receive job offers at graduation—or soon after—than are graduates in other fields.

To wit: A national survey of U.S. nursing school deans and directors found that 65 percent of new BSN graduates had job offers at graduation this past year. By comparison, the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that just 24 percent of new college grads across all disciplines had at least one job offer at graduation this year.

Vanderbilt University (TN) nursing professor Peter Buerhaus, widely considered to be the U.S. expert on the employment of nurses, predicts a national shortage of more than a quarter-million nurses by 2025.


Career Centers See a Spike in Alums Seeking Guidance

Campus career centers are seeing substantial increases in the number of alums they’re serving right now, according to a recent article in The Dallas Morning News.

One case in point: The career center at Texas Woman’s University. Last year, alums accounted for just 5 percent of the center’s individual counseling appointments. This year it’s 26 percent.

“Something is going on in terms of word of mouth,” says TWU career counselor Peter Varnau, who notes that the career center has sent no emails or other promotions to alums.

Elsewhere:
Increasingly Turning to Entrepreneurship

Growing numbers of recent college graduates are giving up on resumes and cover letters and are instead starting businesses of their own, according to a recent article in The San Diego Union-Tribune. Entrepreneurship rates are at a 15-year high for college grads of all ages, according to the 2009 Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity, produced by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

Bernhard Schroeder, director of the Entrepreneurial Management Center at San Diego State University, says continuing economic difficulties are contributing to the business startup trend among young college grads.

“It was surprising to see computer and technical skills not rated as high as the general skills of being able to work with others and being reliable,” says study co-author Meredith Gunter, outreach director for the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

“Employers were resoundingly unanimous about needing those basic skills.”

That conclusion holds true when the survey results are broken down by the worker’s/prospective worker’s level of education. When it comes to graduates of two- and four-year schools alike, employers are most seeking solid verbal skills; the ability to work well with others; and professionalism, reliability, and honesty.


Basic” Traits Outweigh All Others in Minds of Employers

Employers are more concerned about workers’ “basic” traits like honesty, reliability, and social skills than they are about workers’ technological savvy or academic credentials, according to a recent study of 300 Virginia employers.

The employers were asked to rank, in order of importance, a set of 21 job skills that they seek in employees and prospective employees. Topping the list: positive work ethics (No. 1), communication skills (No. 2), and personal ethics (No. 3).

Technology skills came in at No. 8 on the list, while mathematical skills (No. 18), data management skills (No. 19), and computer knowledge (No. 20) finished close to the bottom.

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Campuses Plan to Publicize Salary Information of Alums

Twenty schools in the California State University system are leading a national movement to publicize the salaries of their graduates, according to a recent article in The (San Jose, CA) Mercury News.

Within the next six months, some 300 public colleges and universities across the United States will be posting alumni/ae salary information compiled by web site PayScale.com.

“Families want to see the rate of return on their investment,” says King Alexander, president of California State University-Long Beach.

“Educators have always said: ‘Trust us; it’s worth it.’ Now we can say: ‘Here’s the data; make up your own mind.’”


IN THE NEWS
Seminar Helps Study-Abroad Students Tell Their Stories

Too often, students who have studied abroad are unable to describe what they’ve learned in a way that truly grabs the attention of recruiters and hiring managers.

“Simply saying [something like] ‘Italy was amazing’ isn’t likely to add much to the student candidate’s conversation with a potential internship or job employer,” says Robyn Walter, a career consultant at Illinois Wesleyan University.

That’s why Walter and colleague Laurie Diekhoff have created “Bringing It Home,” a seminar that helps students identify their most meaningful study-abroad experiences and talk about them powerfully—be it on their resumes, in their cover letters, or in their interviews.

“The idea is to help [students] more effectively describe their ‘life-changing’ experience into more specific skills and experiences that demonstrate their growth and potential,” says Walter.

The seminar helps students develop, for example, resume statements like these:

“Navigated four-month educational and living experience in a non-English-speaking country.”

“Developed a working understanding of the European accounting culture during internship.”

The seminar participants also practice telling stories that they can use in behavioral interviews.

“Virtual Career Center” Offers 24/7 Access to Career Advice

It’s one thing to offer career guidance to students who are actually on campus during your career center’s daytime hours. But how can you help evening students—not to mention distance-learning students—with their career concerns?

The career center at Coastal Carolina Community College (NC) has come up with an innovative solution: the Virtual Career Center.

The online tool features nine modules, covering basics like “Orientation to the Career Center” as well as more advanced topics like resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, and developing a compelling career portfolio.

The program has also evolved to include activities that faculty can use to incorporate career-related topics into their courses.

The Virtual Career Center “showcases how, with a little ingenuity and existing resources, service delivery can actually be increased without needing additional staff or finances,” says David La Garde, career and employment services coordinator at the college.

To check out the Virtual Career Center, visit: www.coastalcarolina.edu/career_center/virtual_center/virtual_center_home.htm.

Need Career Information? Now, There’s an App for That

When institutional researchers at Texas Christian University found that iPhones, iPods, and iPads were the third-most-popular platform to access the school’s web site, Susan Nethery saw an opportunity.

Nethery—associate director of marketing for the TCU Career Center—decided to develop six career-related applications (or “apps”) that are now part of the school’s comprehensive iTCU suite of apps for students who use the iPod Touch, iPhone, and/or iPad.

Among the topics covered by the apps: interviewing, business etiquette, and dining etiquette. Users can also access more than 75 career-related videos, as well as information about upcoming career events and the career center itself.

“This app will allow students and alumni/ae to access [career] information on their own time, without making appointments or being in front of their computer,” says Nethery.
“It’s one more way—in addition to advising, events, Facebook, our web site, and classroom presentations—to assist students with their career needs.”

Nethery created all of the content for the apps in-house, but turned to an outside firm for the design and programming work.

To learn more, visit: careers.tcu.edu/iphone.

“Preview Night” Introduces Students to Internship Path

Some of the students at Lakeland College (WI) are required to complete an internship for their major; some aren’t.

But all of them, reasons Lakeland career counselor Jess Lambrecht, can use a little education on what an internship is like—not to mention some encouragement in their efforts to land one.

That’s what the career center’s recent “Internship Preview Night” event was all about.

“Based on last year’s [National Association of Colleges and Employers] internship survey, we know that about 85 percent of employers prefer candidates with at least one internship experience—and a large percentage prefer students with two internship experiences,” says Lambrecht.

“Our students are typically very good at connecting with our office to help in this process. But it is the students who don’t have an internship as a graduation requirement that we wanted to encourage the most.”

The two-hour Internship Preview Night event was held in the school’s athletic center and featured:

- An internship fair, where 11 participating organizations displayed information about their internships and interacted with students.
- An employer panel, led by five employers who explained the value of internships (from their perspective) and answered students’ questions.

A student panel, led by four Lakeland seniors who discussed what they had learned during their own internships.

A brief session on the formal process for completing an internship as a Lakeland student.

“We had 42 students in attendance, which is a very good turnout for us,” says Lambrecht, who notes that the school enrolls just 950 day students.

Mock Interviews Target Grad Students in Student Affairs

Many campus career counselors—perhaps you’re one of them—hold master’s degrees in student affairs or closely related disciplines like counseling.

But how prepared did you feel for your own job interviews for career services (or other academic) positions—particularly considering that you probably had to face a search committee in the process?

The career center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania makes sure the graduate students in the university’s M.Ed. in Student Affairs program will be ready by offering a Student Affairs Mock Interview Program each spring.

Working in collaboration with the chair of the student affairs program, career center staff have reached out to about a dozen KU staff members who themselves are alums of the program. Those staff members serve on two- to three-person “search committees” for each participating student, evaluating the students’ resumes and cover letters and taking them through a practice interview as well.

The students can customize their mock interview experiences by identifying a particular campus office they’d eventually like to work for.

“Students headed out to interviews are much better prepared for what a typical interview day is like on most campuses,” says Kerri Gardi, director of KU’s Career Development Center.
“Networking Line Dance” Exercise Takes the Stress Out of Introductions

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: Karen Noll Arnie, Assistant Director of Internships and Career Programs at Queens University of Charlotte (NC).

The Tool/Technique: A “Networking Line Dance” activity that gives students plenty of practice introducing themselves in a professional setting.

Why did you come up with the “Networking Line Dance” activity?
During our annual Networking Reception, we noticed that many students would freeze up as soon as they entered the room. I really wanted the students to feel that introducing themselves and shaking hands in a professional situation is second nature, but takes practice—lots of it.

So Sherryl Baker (a fellow instructor at Queens) and I introduced the “Networking Line Dance” in our World of Work classes to help students smooth out the rough spots in their elevator speeches through repetition in a low-stress environment.

How does the activity work?
You’ll need a timer and a room with space to move around. It’s helpful to use a timer up on a screen where everyone can see it (ala www.online-stopwatch.com).

First, put the students into two equal lines, facing each other. (If you have an odd number of students, have one of them operate the timer and then rotate back into line after each cycle.)

Start the clock at 30 seconds and have the right-side partners extend their hand, shake, and introduce themselves to the partners who are facing them. Stop at 30 seconds, then have the left-side partners introduce themselves for 30 seconds.

Next, have the students in the left-hand line shift one partner to their right. The person at the end of the line moves to a partner at the beginning of the line. Keep the students moving quickly.

Repeat the 30-second clock for both partners for two or three cycles. Keep it moving, and make sure the students really stop talking when the timer goes off.

After three or four rounds, you can add a 30-second timeout for partner feedback if you’d like. Time this segment too, and make sure everyone stops talking when it’s done. Then switch back to more 30-second introductions, moving quickly.

To create more challenge, call out new scenarios—like “You’re meeting the CEO” or “you’ve met this person before but you don’t remember his/her name.”

Keep going until all the students have had a chance to do at least eight rotations.

Then process the activity as a group. Discuss how the introductions changed during the course of the exercise, what was hard or easy, observations, body language, situational adjustments, memorable introductions, etc. The students are usually fairly pumped up to debrief.

What are the key outcomes of using this activity with your students?
Students loved it! The next networking program found them walking up to alums and employers with more confidence and poise. The students also brought back more business cards and shared more stories about leads and follow-up activities when they returned to class after the event.

The Line Dance became the first of many “flash” activities that we integrated into the class throughout the semester to help students work on their communication skills for interviews and networking situations.
EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Passion and Authenticity Really Do Sell Well with Prospective Employers

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: Alaina Love, former HR executive and co-founder of Purpose Linked Consulting.

The Issue: Students/grads who exude true passion really do capture the attention of prospective employers.

In a recent article, you wrote: “As a former human resource executive who has recruited more people and filled more jobs than I can remember, I can assure you that passion sells.” What do you mean?

By the time a job candidate makes it to the interview stage, the company is fairly certain that the candidate has the requisite skills, experience, and educational background for the job. What the organization is looking for during the interview phase are fit, enthusiasm for the job, and deeper insight into the candidate as an individual.

What I looked for in particular were authenticity and passion. When candidates are authentic and passionate, it’s infectious. The passionate candidate is someone you want to have on your team.

So instead of guessing at what the interviewer wants to hear, at some point students need to be courageous, authentic, and passionate enough to speak their own truth. I’ve hired people and then found them a position just because I knew we couldn’t let someone that talented and passionate slip through our fingers!

You wrote in your article that “coming to understand yourself—the real You at your core—and what you can be passionate about is the most important discovery you can make as a student.” How can students actually do this?

I encourage students to work hard and play hard but reflect often. It’s through reflection and taking time for contemplative thinking that we begin to make sense of the world around us and our experiences in it. We come to understand how those experiences help to shape who we are.

Through reflective contemplation, students can determine what they value, pinpoint their convictions, discover more about their passions, and understand more deeply the role they play in the relationships they share with others. Much more time and attention need to be devoted to self-discovery in our educational system.

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

Career services professionals play a key role in helping students set off on the right career track, rather than embarking on a 20+-year mistake—which can be how long it takes some people to course correct.

To best support students, it’s beneficial for career services professionals to offer tools to help students discover more about their inner drivers. In some cases, this may be the only opportunity students have during their entire academic career to learn more about their personality and the environments in which they are likely to thrive.

One of the things I frequently hear from students is that they want to discover their passion and build a life around it. Our company has developed a high-quality, valid, and reliable online tool called The Passion Profiler™ that we’ve been using with great success with working adults—and that we have recently adapted for students. We are now offering customized access to this tool at the college level and would welcome inquiries from career services professionals.

www.thepurposelink.com
RESOURCE REVIEWS

The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Getting Government Jobs

Review by Peter Vogt

The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Getting Government Jobs is solid through and through, largely because it was written with clarity by experts from the Partnership for Public Service.

But practically speaking, you and your students will value the book most for three of its chapters—two of them obvious choices, the other perhaps not so much.

First, the no-brainers.

Chapter 12, “Student Opportunities in Government,” briefly covers federal government internship possibilities before launching into a discussion of the two subcomponents of the federal Student Educational Employment Program—namely, the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).

Both programs are designed specifically for current college students, the chapter notes, although SCEP tends to be the best bet for students who ultimately want a career with the federal government.

Speaking of careers ... Chapter 13—“Entry-Level Jobs: Getting In”—describes several entry-level employment initiatives within the federal government: the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF), the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), AmeriCorps VISTA, and the Peace Corps.

Chances are your students will be spending a lot of time with this chapter as well.

Now, the dark horse: Chapter 10, “Completing Your Application Package.” Students who want to work for the federal government but are unfamiliar with the fed’s KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) approach to assessing prospective employees will quickly get an eye-opening education on the subject.

In particular, the chapter offers more than a dozen specific tips to help students with the writing-intensive process of responding to the KSA “prompts” that federal agencies include in their job listings.

“Completing your KSAs—and doing so thoughtfully—is half the battle for completing your application,” the book stresses (p. 119).

Of course, you have to identify job or internship possibilities first. The book covers that too, along with background checks and security clearances, the interviewing process, and more.

Your students probably won’t read The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Getting Government Jobs in order, from start to finish. But that’s the beauty of all the Idiot’s books: You can jump in wherever you want to and get what you need.

Perfect for today’s busy and sometimes impatient students.

Beyond Talent

Review by Peter Vogt

I’m not a musician (despite the “concerts” I perform with my car radio). But I can still sing the praises of Beyond Talent.

This book is not for students who are merely exploring music careers; it’s for those who know they want to work in the music industry—but who acknowledge that they don’t (yet) understand the business aspects of the profession or the entrepreneurial attitude one needs to succeed.

Author Angela Myles Beeching—director of career services at New England Conservatory—covers universal career development necessities like relationship building and networking, but in a way that speaks to budding musicians (particularly those who are interested in performing).

I can just imagine student musicians feeling like they don’t have a career resource that truly speaks to them. Once those students read Beyond Talent, they’ll be changing their tune.


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.

Online Course Offers a Solid Primer on Professional Skills

Business Roundtable and the HR Policy Association—in collaboration with consulting firm Accenture—have created a free online course to help college students and recent graduates understand the professional skills they’ll need to succeed in the world of work.

JobSTART 101: Smart Tips and Real-World Training features six modules on topics like establishing one’s online brand and developing one’s “workplace persona” and relationships.

The program also offers quizzes and a downloadable JobSTART 101 workbook.

To check out the course for yourself, visit: www.jobstart101.org.

“It’s Not Your Mom’s Job Hunt”—but Parents Can Help

A recent post on The Wall Street Journal’s Hire Education blog offers college students and recent grads balanced advice on the role of parents in the job search.

“It’s Not Your Mom’s Job Hunt” is crystal clear from the beginning: “If a recruiter has to deal with your mom or dad,” writes Jobvite president and CEO Dan Finnigan, “you’re not getting the job (unless they own the company).”

But then Finnigan goes on to outline six specific ways parents can help in students’/grads’ job searches.


Maybe There’s No Such Thing as the “Right” College Major

Though college students—and, often, their parents as well—frequently get hung up on choosing the “right” major, a recent New York Times blog posting suggests that the agonizing often goes for naught.

In “Your College Major May Not Be as Important as You Think,” writer Zac Bissonnette notes that “in recent years, research into the importance of choice of major has led to a surprising conclusion: It’s really not all that important.”

Bissonnette then outlines “four great reasons to pick a liberal arts major.”

The article is available at: thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/major.

Article Offers Job Search Tips for LGBT Students and Grads

A recent article in Metro Weekly—a Washington, D.C., magazine that focuses on lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) issues—takes a close look at the dilemmas many LGBT college students and recent grads face in their post-graduation job searches.

“Resume Reveal: Career Gurus Advise on Appropriate Level of Professional Gaiety” discusses questions like whether LGBT students/grads should highlight on their resumes their leadership or involvement in LGBT organizations.

The piece also covers ways LGBT students/grads can research which companies and organizations have the best non-discrimination policies in place.

Visit: www.metroweekly.com/domestic_partner/money/?ak=5731.

Branding Expert Gives Job Search Advice to New Grads

Personal branding expert Dan Schawbel offers three targeted job search tips for college students and new grads in his recent BloombergBusinessweek article “The Young and Successful Job Search.”

Read Schawbel’s advice at: www.businessweek.com/managing/content/aug2010/ca2010089_168698.htm.

Booklet Highlights Career Opportunities in Safety Profession

The American Society of Safety Engineers Foundation has produced a 63-page booklet on the diverse career opportunities in the safety field.

Career Guide to the Safety Profession describes what the safety profession is, what safety professionals do, and the settings where safety professionals work.

It also includes a detailed “Employment Outlook for Safety Professionals,” along with several profiles of people who work in the industry.

More Summer Internships—but More Competition, Too

College students (and, as the case may be, recent graduates) will have more internship possibilities to pursue next summer—but the competition for those internships will also be tougher, according to a recent analysis by web site Internships.com.

“[B]ased on our site statistics, we know that students are looking for summer internships earlier and earlier,” notes an Internships.com news release.

“In October 2010, Internships.com saw a significant increase in activity, with students actively searching for Summer 2011 internships [and with] employers posting their open internships for Summer 2011.”

Similarly:

Of all the internship search queries on the Internships.com site, the number containing the word “summer” rose by 37 percent between September and October.

Of all the internship openings posted by employers on the site, the percentage of openings for Summer 2011 almost tripled between September and October.

“The data [are] clear: Students understand that internships undoubtedly enhance their employment prospects post-college,” says Robin Richards, CEO of Internships.com. “Early searches for next summer’s internships show they recognize the importance of internships in gaining relevant experience to help set them apart from other applicants.”


For Many Freshmen, “Calling” Is Already a Familiar Thought

The concept of having a “calling” is on the minds of plenty of college freshmen, according to a recent study in The Career Development Quarterly.

In the study—which involved more than 5,500 first-year students—participants were asked whether they already felt called to pursue a certain career. Forty-four percent said that assessment was “mostly” or “totally” true of them.

Moreover, 28 percent of the students said it was “mostly” or “totally” true that they were currently in the process of searching for a calling.

So “it seems critical that this construct [of calling] be addressed in career counseling,” stress study authors Ryan Duffy and William Sedlacek.

“(C)ounselors are encouraged to make calling a part of their vocabulary when advising students on career-related issues and, ultimately, assist them in their calling search process or offer support to help make their current career calling a reality.

“The results of this study suggest that this construct is important to students, and knowledge of its effect on a student’s career is just beginning to be discovered.”


Students in Career-Focused Majors Need Guidance Too

College students in majors “that are associated with a clear career path” will benefit from career guidance activities just as much as students in other majors do, according to a recent study in the Australian Journal of Education.

The study involved 232 undergraduates—90 of them accounting majors, 50 of them marketing majors, and 92 of them general (“generic”) business majors. The researchers were examining, among other things, the clarity of the students’ career directions and their reasons for enrolling in college in the first place.

Business Ownership Appeals to Many an 18- to 24-Year-Old

Despite—or perhaps because of—the nation’s ongoing economic difficulties, many 18- to 24-year-olds say they’d like to start their own businesses someday, according to a recent Harris Interactive study commissioned by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

More than 5,000 Americans between the ages of 8 and 24 took part in the study. Among the 18- to 24-year-olds questioned, 38 percent said they’re interested in becoming entrepreneurs someday.

And 62 percent said they would be successful in their business launches if they work hard.

“The economic downturn, it seems, has done nothing to dissuade young people from their dreams of business ownership,” says Carl Schramm, president and CEO of the Kauffman Foundation.

Sources: Kauffman Foundation news release, November 15, 2010; Youth Entrepreneurship Survey 2010 (summary fact sheet), Kauffman Foundation, November 15, 2010.
The study found, not unexpectedly, that students in the career-specific major of accounting were less likely to leave college before completing their degree. The accounting students also tended to have clearer reasons for attending college. However, note researchers Lesley Willcoxson and Monte Wynder (p. 186): 

Even within this small sample from a single university, while accounting students exhibit greater clarity of career direction than do students undertaking a generic business major, marketing students do not. ... [And] accounting students who are not clear about the type of occupation they want are at significantly greater risk of attrition, as are marketing students who lack clear career goals.

“These findings suggest that career guidance activities should be provided, proactively and possibly compulsorily, even for students enrolled in majors that are associated with a clear career path.” Willcoxson and Wynder conclude.

“Such activities are likely to increase retention, and may deepen understanding of the range of career options even for those confirmed in their choice of career.”


Grad School Admission Will Be More Dicey in Year Ahead

The graduate school admissions process “will likely become increasingly competitive” in the year immediately ahead, according to a recent survey by Kaplan Test Prep.

In the survey—which questioned graduate school admissions officers at 108 top programs in the United States—78 percent of the respondents predicted an increase in the number of applicants for the current cycle.

“The past couple of years have been hard for college graduates trying to enter the workforce for the first time, as well as for working professionals looking to change careers or bounce back after layoffs, which has made graduate school an appealing destination for both groups,” says Liza Weale, executive director of pre-business and pre-graduate programs for Kaplan Test Prep.

One of the study’s other intriguing findings: 53 percent of the respondents said that, compared with two years ago, there has been an increase this year in the number of people applying to graduate school immediately after finishing their undergraduate degrees.

Source: Kaplan Test Prep news release, November 9, 2010.

More Study-Abroad Students Getting Practical Experience

For the first time in the 25 years that data have been tracked, the number of American college students studying abroad for academic credit fell during 2008-2009, according to the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, released recently by the Institute of International Education.

The study did uncover, however, several positive trends related to the future career prospects of study-abroad students:

The number of students participating in practical work experience as part of their study abroad rose 37 percent between the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years.

The number of students studying abroad in China went up 4 percent, following a 19 percent increase the previous year.


Engineering Grads Lead the Way in Starting Salaries

New college graduates with engineering degrees earn the highest starting salaries, on average, while new grads with communications and English degrees earn the lowest, according to a recent study conducted for The Wall Street Journal.

Engineering grads make about $56,000 a year in their first jobs out of college, the study found, while communications and English grads both make around $34,000.

As a general rule, the starting salaries of liberal arts grads are lowest, while those of grads with technical and/or quantitative degrees are highest. The study was conducted by salary information web site PayScale.com and surveyed about 11,000 people who graduated from college between 1999 and 2010.

PETE’S COLUMN

Two Kids, Two Inspiring Philosophies

By Peter Vogt

When I’m asked to describe the key difference between my soon-to-be 9-year-old son, Isaac, and my just-turned 3-year-old daughter, Katie, I can easily boil my presentation down to two phrases—one for each kid.

Isaac: “Why?”
Katie: “Why not?”

Isaac, much like his old man, is careful and deliberate. He’ll take calculated risks—eventually—but it will always be in his own time, and only after he’s satisfied himself with a sufficient answer to the “Why?” question that always seems to be top of his mind.

Katie, on the other hand, is much more prone to take a chance first—“Why not?”—and ask any other questions later. This often leads to unexpected, suitable-for-high-fives successes. And, of course, it inevitably leads to the occasional instances of “road rash” as well.

I’m fortunate to have Isaac and Katie in my life because I can emulate one or the other—or, often, both—of them in my own career/entrepreneurial activities as well as in my ongoing career outreach to college students and recent graduates.

Isaac inspires me to study situations thoroughly and to plan thoughtfully.

Katie inspires me to—eventually—stop thinking and start doing.

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suggested that many companies are placing a premium on traits like flexibility, creativity, and an entrepreneurial mind-set.

“Most employers are out there looking for the best candidate they can find, regardless of major,” Gardner says.

Starting Salaries

Eighty percent of employers said they will not be raising the starting salaries of newly hired college grads in 2010-2011.

Seventeen percent of employers said they’ll be increasing grads’ starting salaries (by 3 percent, on average), while 4 percent of employers said they’ll be reducing grads’ starting salaries (by an average of 9 percent).

And “remember the words ‘signing bonus?’ Don’t expect to hear them again anytime soon,” says Gardner.

Student Preparation

Employers see today’s new college graduates as less well prepared than their counterparts of five years ago when it comes to several key career-related traits and activities:

- Having realistic career expectations.
- Expressing their career interests and direction.
- Demonstrating professional maturity.
- Having a professional demeanor.
- Articulating their skills and competencies.

Sources: Recruiting Trends 2010-2011, Collegiate Employment Research Institute, Michigan State University, November 2010; Michigan State University news release, November 17, 2010.

Editor’s note: The Collegiate Employment Research Institute web site notes that, thanks to financial support from Whirlpool, Cummins, and AcelorMittal, this year’s Recruiting Trends report is available as a free, downloadable PDF.

To learn more, visit: www.ceri.msu.edu/recruiting-trends-2010-2011.