

1946

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Recommended Citation

McLean, Beth Bailey (1946) "Careful College Preparation Aids The Home Economist in Business," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 26 : No. 6, Article 4.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol26/iss6/4>

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Careful College Preparation Aids

The Home Economist in Business



Beth Bailey McLean, M.S. '33, director of the Home Economics Division of the Swift Research Laboratories tells of tomorrow's opportunities

HOW fortunate, lucky or wise the woman is who chooses home economics for her college training. Of course, she wants a home of her own and she finds training for every phase of homemaking in this college course. But the modern woman also wants to test her ability to earn a living. She wants to prove to herself, her family and her friends that she is worth a real pay check.

She's a lucky woman if she finds early in her college work just what she wants to do after graduation. She then can elect those subjects which will strengthen her fundamental knowledge and skills.

But actually there isn't a subject in the entire curricula which won't prove helpful if she is clever enough to see the inter-relation of subject matter. More and more we realize the need for a breadth of knowledge and a wide interest in people, activities, places and things. In 4 short years no woman can take all the courses she should want to take. But no one is expected to complete her education in 4 years. Probably the saddest failures in life are those people who stop studying, reading and learning when they get their diploma.

So let's talk about the woman who likes food work better than other subjects and who thinks she would like to work for a food company. What courses should she take? Naturally she will get all the food courses offered, also she'll need chemistry and other sciences that help her understand the purchasing, storage, cookery, service and nutritional qualities of food. For

breadth of vision she'll need art principles, economics, sociology, history and all the oral and written English courses that can possibly be included.

Research is the spirit of the day. Some food majors will find the challenge of research work so great that they will elect to enrich their college training with more science and research techniques. Food research is a big field for the home economist who has an inquiring mind, who is accurate in detail, who is persistent and open-minded.

There is perhaps even a bigger field for the home economist who likes to use her capabilities and training in direct application of scientific facts to home problems. Such a woman must know people and like people. If she is to do this consumer relation work, she must know how to express herself in oral and written words, in pictures, graphs and charts. She must be able to key her message to the audience she wishes to reach. She should have a flare for dramatic presentations and for artistry of speech and action. She must be sincere and inspire confidence. She must be healthy and personable. Irritating mannerisms or oddities will lose an audience even when the message is presented well.

When she gets a position in business, she will find that business is a competitive field where no one can be static and succeed. So the home economist in business must be alert to change. She must be willing and eager to try new methods, to sense new trends. She must think of her college courses as foundation stones

on which to build, but she must be willing to replace even these foundation stones when scientific discoveries prove better ones are available.

TO succeed in her chosen field she must like her work. No one can be truly successful unless she is happy in her work. But the home economics trained woman is versatile. She finds many kinds of positions in a food company. Her college courses were comprehensive in scope. In her first position she begins to feel a liking for one type of work more than another. All her past training and experience seem to re-group and rearrange to strengthen her ability in a more specific field.

The woman who goes into research work as a food technician will read research magazines, go to research meetings and continue her scientific training. But she will be more successful if she can write well and speak in public easily. And, of course, she must be able to get along with people.

The woman who goes into consumer relation work will read trade papers, advertising and radio news, nutrition publications and keep informed on changing consumer interests and needs. But she must be able to understand research work and she should be anxious to carry on some form of research work herself.

So the home economist in business becomes a specialist, but she must never neglect broader interests and those cultural experiences that make her a woman in the finest sense of the word.

As to specific types of work, the food technician must have high food work standards. She often sets up standard testing procedures and conducts tests for quality. She may develop new products for the company or suggest improvements in production, quality, packaging or merchandising of a product. She develops copy for labels, originates recipes for use of products and compiles recipe booklets for different types of consumer groups.

The food technician often has to prepare the same food for different uses such as a test of quality, a variation for a news story, a set-up for a black and white picture or a set-up for a four color shot. Though the same food is used, the techniques for optimum results are different.

The home economist in consumer relations work must be able to analyze the needs and wants of her audience and the welfare of her company. She must then plan her lecture, cooking school or illustrated presentation to give the best possible help to both consumer and company. This requires constant touch with local buying conditions and national affairs, her audience and the company supplying the money to make her work possible. If the home economist analyzes her job well, she will see that the company's interests are best served by doing a conscientious job of serving the best interests of the consumers, the potential customers of the company.

CONSUMER relations work may be carried on through newspaper and magazine articles, through advertising media or through merchandising activity in helping salesmen and retailers do a better job of serving the consumer. The same message may have to be retold in dozens of ways depending upon the media, the audience and results expected.

Committee participation is an important phase of the work of every home economist with a food company. Plans for product improvement, package designs or advertising programs call for help from the

home economist. Discussions with advertising agencies, affiliated trade associations and other projects involving company interests call for clear thinking, broad experiences and utmost tact of the home economist. In these meetings, the home economist must represent the woman's viewpoint.

In most food companies a training period for new employees is considered essential to efficient operation and continuous progress of work. New graduates are given an opportunity to learn various types of work and to specialize in activities best suited to their abilities. In a large staff friendly competition is desirable. Cooperation and loyalty to staff and company are imperative for the success of the individual and the whole department.

How does the young graduate apply? Who gets the position? A well typed letter should tell in perfect English, and correct spelling, the major interest of the applicant, her college, date of graduation and an offer to send transcript of grades. But grades are not enough. An employer wants to know about participation in campus activities, evidences of leadership and social adjustment, vacation work, travel and cultural accomplishments. An employer wants to see a good photograph of the applicant as she will look if asked to come for an interview.

For the personal interview the applicant should write or telephone for an appointment and be on time! It helps to know something about the company and the department work. It is wise to know the name and correct title of the prospective employer. The applicant should look her professional best. She should be natural, interested and able to carry on a normal conversation. Most employers test for "horse sense" rather than technical skill in these interviews. It is natural to be interested in salary and hours, but the employer will bring up these topics if and when he becomes really interested in the applicant.

The employer looks for sincerity, emotional stability and the ability to continue to learn and to intelligently apply all knowledge and skills by the home economics graduate of today.

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