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The After-College Search

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What’s that?
A light at the end of the tunnel!
It’s been four long years (or is that five years? Six?) and you are ready to graduate. But to get to that light, you have to be on the tracks. That means resumes, cover letters, internships, job searches and treks to the career services office. Got it together?
Turn the page and let ethos help.

The After-College

Artwork and Design by: John Loecke
Job Search Q & A

Beverly Madden, director of career planning and placement services for Iowa State, answers questions on resumes, cover letters and the job search process.

e: What's the most common mistake you see in resumes and cover letters?
BM: Probably the most common is the deficiency of a resume. This is when students do not write resumes to meet the employers' needs.

e: Do employers go through their stack of resumes and systematically throw some out?
BM: Yes, different companies have different rules of thumb that they are going to apply. Spelling is probably the universal rule. With typos, some people say, "Why would I hire someone who doesn't care enough to check over their resume?"

e: Do you have some general tips for resume writing?
BM: The most important is to not make your resume an autobiography or a list of all you've ever done. Students must know their audiences. You want to make the employer want to meet you so you can have an interview.

e: Do you have some general tips for writing cover letters?
BM: Make sure the letter is addressed to a specific person. A letter with "to whom it may concern" goes nowhere. The three best people to send your cover letters to are: whoever has the power to hire in your area, the CEOs (because even if they send it down to personnel, it will have their stamp on it, and that looks pretty important), and the human resources personnel.

To get those names, you can use a phonebook. Call the company, tell them what you are doing, and ask them whom you should send it to. You can also get names from directories, career networks, certain ISU newsletters and from Iowa State alumni files.

e: Does paper color, typeface and style make much difference?
BM: It's just like dressing for an interview. You may wear something different to an interview for an accounting position than you would to an interview for a fashion designer position. Conservative, easy-to-read resumes and cover letters usually are better. Make sure the resume and cover letter follow the same style. Make sure also that your name, address and phone number gets put on each. Usually your cover letter goes into one file while the resume is circulated.

e: What tips do you have for conducting job searches?
BM: If you can do some on-campus interviewing, it can be a drop in the bucket for you. There are only two factors that could limit you from getting the job you want: one, your lack of geographic mobility, and two, the effectiveness of your job search. The second one is a skill you can learn, and this is the most important thing that we can do for you at the career services offices.

e: Is it a good idea to pay someone to distribute your resume?
BM: I would keep my antennae up if I were doing this. If someone charges you $99 to put out a resume, what are they doing with that money? There are so many jobs listed on campus, and so many other ways to contact employers. Why not put your resume onto the internet on your own?

— Rhonda Drost
A Partner in the Search

College career services mean students don’t have to go it alone.

The job search may be ugly, but you don’t have to go it alone, thanks to the campus career services offices. Except for Business and Liberal Arts and Sciences which are combined, each college has its own career services office.

The offices provide opportunities for major and career exploration, workshops on job search skills, interviewing techniques and resume writing, career counseling and assistance with employment searches. Some offices keep records and resumes that they send to companies seeking specific types of employees.

Each office offers unique features as well as the basic ones. For example, the Business/LAS office, which serves about 900 students and alumni, offers LAS 104, a personal career development course for undecided freshmen and sophomores. This term there are three sections of 25 students each.

The college of Family and Consumer Sciences has a required eight-week, junior-level class in which students learn to write resumes and cover letters, explore the job search process, and participate in two informational interviews. These interviews involve observing and conversing with professionals in the field.

The FCS Career Services office also produces a Positions Available List (PAL) twice a month during the academic year. Director Beverly Kruepempel says she would like to get PAL on-line eventually.

— Darcy Dougherty

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On to a Higher Degree

If the challenge of four years of undergraduate college just isn’t enough, there’s always the prospect of taking on a couple more years under the graduate program. Enrollment in Iowa State’s graduate program has risen in the past few years, said Carolyn Payne, assistant to the dean of graduate school. Currently, Iowa State has about 4,500 graduate students.

Preparing for the process “is work, and don’t let anyone tell you different,” said Paula Puffer, a senior in English who is preparing to earn a master’s degree in technical writing.

Payne offered advice for students about to begin the graduate school application process. “If a person is interested in going to graduate school, first they need to see if the area they are interested in has advanced study and then decide whether to get a masters or a doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.),” she said.

Deciding what degree you would like to obtain is only the beginning. Once this is decided, there are a number of other steps that must be completed before you can become a graduate student.

“Depending on the school, generally you have to take the Graduate Record Exam. You also have to go and do library research. The university library here has a lot of college catalogs on microfiche,” Puffer said.

“I started by looking at articles that had been assigned for upper level classes and went from there,” she said.

Students are often advised not to attend graduate school at the same school where they earned their undergraduate degree. “They would like you to get a different perspective,” Puffer said. “By going to a different school, you get new views and you can merge those two ideas together to get a more unique outlook on your profession.”

Puffer said the application process is expensive. “When you take your GREs you should try to have an idea of what schools you want to go to. Otherwise you end up wasting money,” she said.

Although graduate school may sound threatening, it isn’t necessarily so. Heather Strait, a graduate student in anthropology, said she thinks being a graduate student is easier than being an undergraduate.

“In some aspects I think it is easier as a graduate student because I have fewer classes to take, which allows me to concentrate on them more,” Strait said.

— Jen Schroeder

Work Abroad

The Whole Wide World

The limits of a job search do not have to be defined by national borders. Several United States students find excitement and knowledge waiting for them at jobs in other countries.

While working abroad may seem difficult, the Study Abroad Center in 5 Hamilton Hall has the resources to help.

“Working abroad is very different from studying abroad. When you work, you become more integrated into the culture. That kind of exposure you’re not going to get anywhere else,” said Bert Schneiders, Coordinator of the International exchange program at the Study Abroad Center.

Both students and recent graduates have opportunities to work overseas for a summer and sometimes longer depending on the country, said Lisa Sapolis, program assistant at the Study Abroad Center.

Finding these jobs can be difficult, but the Study Abroad Center offers advice, books, training and information about the programs that will get students there, Sapolis said.

Jobs don’t have to be connected to an academic major, Schneiders said. You can work in a National Park, be a lifeguard on a beach or work in a pub, at a convenience store or on a farm. While some countries have a language requirement, others may want participants for their English skills, Sapolis said.

The center can also hook up students with programs, such as the Council on International Education Exchange, which helps students take care of travel and work details. The CIEE sends its participants information on their target country and a work visa, Schneiders said.

Financial aid is available to students who are registered for a course in which they receive credit for going abroad, such as research or independent studies, Schneiders said. — Jennifer Holland
The Outdoor Alternative

Ditch the desk. Eighty-six the suits. There are numerous paid job opportunities throughout the United States and Iowa at summer camps and outdoor recreation companies.

More than 40 such companies were represented at the 1995 ISU Job Fair.

"We just ask that you love kids and that you'd be willing to learn and participate in activities," said Heidi Morrison, program director for Camp Hantesa and Camp Fire Day Camps in Boone.

Camp Hantesa was one company that was represented at the Job Fair. This summer, it will fill about 32 positions, including 20 in counseling, two or three in water recreation, two in maintenance, five in food service and two or three for the horse program.

Hantesa pays $1,200 for the summer, which includes room and board, laundry, health insurance and workman's compensation. The jobs are from June 2 to Aug. 5, with a day off each week. College credit for work can sometimes be arranged.

Another outdoor job source is Ames Parks and Recreation. Aquatics and Activities Supervisor Paul Peanasky said the department must fill between 250 and 300 summer positions, including day camp counselors, dance and gymnastics instructors, softball umpires, maintenance staff and preschool program instructors.

All positions are paid and part-time, and Peanasky said most of the applicants each year are Iowa State students.

Lists of camps and outdoor recreation jobs can be found at the campus Career Services Offices.

—Becky Waller

The Temporary Solution

Who could ask for more in a job than flexibility, good pay and a chance to get a foot in the door? These advantages draw many students to temporary employment agencies, either between academic terms or after graduation.

Two temp agencies represented at the 1995 ISU Job Fair said they receive several student and recent graduate applicants each year.

"It is a time for them to get the experience that permanent employers value," said Corinne Seiser, the Manpower Temporary Services marketing director.

Marla Tremmel of Accountemps, said many graduates are hired by companies where they have worked as temps.

Temp agencies interview and test applicants to determine their qualifications, and then place them in temporary jobs. Job titles can include clerks, secretaries, data entry workers, maintenance workers, receptionists, material handlers and heavy laborers.

Temp jobs range from day-long assignments to year-long ones, and most jobs are full-time. Salaries usually range from $5.50 to $8.00 per hour.

Some, including Accountemps, offer dental and health insurance, bonuses and paid holidays and vacations, said Tremmel, the agency's staffing manager.

Manpower and Accountemps have offices in Ames and throughout the United States. Students who would like to work outside of Iowa should contact the Ames temp agency office for more information.

—Becky Waller

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Accountemps: 515/282-8367

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