

News Reporting

Two Samples

Article

The Job Search: Students and the Recession

by Christina Rodriguez

Tyrone Branch is a 22 year-old graduating senior at Temple University in Philadelphia. He is a South Jamaica, Queens native who wants to come back to New York to find work. His major is architecture with a minor in geography and urban studies. He is working a part-time job at a retail store while he finishes up at school. Branch wants to find a full-time job after he graduates and then move on to graduate school. His parents help him out, however one is more involved than the other.

“I know my father is both understanding and supportive, in fact, he is helping me find a job back home in New York,” said Branch. “My mother, however, is not really concerned about my career status, so I don’t think it matters to her whether or not I have a career-related job or a regular job.”

For Branch, he is not really as concerned either, but is hopeful about his future job status. “I am not really scared or concerned about this. I believe that I will find my job eventually. Of course, I would like a job relating to my career immediately after graduation, but I understand that these things take time and so I am willing to wait while working at a regular job.”

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Hope, worry and determination go hand in hand. The recession has many students and recent graduates concerned about where their future lies in the job market. Students are hopeful and determined to find work during this recession, but are worried that they lose their potential jobs to those who have lost their jobs and have been in the

job market for years, getting those entry level jobs that students and graduates are striving for.

According to the National Center of Educational Statistics, there are about 930,756 students currently enrolled in college as undergraduates and 259,918 college graduates in New York, a large number of hopefuls to have entering the work force, estimating that more than 75% to be entering the workforce after college.

For colleges, this means that they have their work cut out for them, with their career centers being a major resource for students. These job resource gold mines are often neglected by most students, but hold valuable information on how students can find work, especially during this recession.

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Alshawn Rushing, a 22 year-old senior at CUNY Brooklyn College who is graduating next fall semester, does have his concerns. He is a journalism major who currently does not have a job.

“It’s unfair for the middle and lower class, especially since this recession was created and fueled by the greed and lies of those that are already rich,” said Rushing. “I am concerned that I won’t be able to pay off my student loans and start off my life. Or that I’ll be woefully unemployed.”

Rushing’s plans in the future involve freelancing. “I can, and actually want to, freelance as a journalist and a photographer on the side. I’d imagine it would help pay for a lot of things, I just don’t know where to get started.”

“Luckily, I saved money from my last job. Of course that money is slowly running out.” he added.

Alexa Debidin is a recent 22 year-old graduate from SUNY Stony Brook University. She graduated with a bachelor's in health science with a concentration in radiologic technology in May 2008. She is in a clinical year, for which she has to travel two and a half hours from her home in Queens to hospitals in Long Island and work in her field, but as she says, "We do not get paid for our time and effort."

Her clinicals are like a brief stint in graduate school and an internship rolled into one. She lives at home with her parents in South Ozone Park, Queens.

"My parents are not all understanding of my current situation. They expected once I graduated that I will be bringing in an income, but that is not the case," she said. "They don't understand why I have to spend money to spend an extra year in school for no credits or extra degree."

However finding a job while she is in her clinical year has not come easy to Debidin. With working at the hospitals from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and having to travel two and a half hours back and forth. "It is hard to find a job just for the weekends," she said. She relies on job search engines like monster.com and careerbuilder.com to find a part time job during this time while she is doing her clinicals. "Those are very disappointing because you can spend hours filling out an application and never get a reply back."

"My college (Stony Brook) is not held responsible for finding us work. There are no job fairs for us in this field. It's our sole responsibility to find a job," she continued. "They will look over our resume and do mock interviews, but that is about it. I am unable to use them now because I do not live on campus and I am only on campus twice a month because I do not have the ability to drive out there on my own."

Debidin is relying on networking herself at the clinical sites she is assigned to, hoping to get hired or recommended to another hospital or imaging facility.

Debidin has her concerns though, in finding a job in her field. “I’m being trained for a specific job title. Many hospitals are downsizing and not hiring new people, so I am worried if I would be able to find a job when I complete my program. More specifically, a job in New York City. There are known to be jobs in my field in the Southwest,” she said.

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Branch has a part-time job while Debidin and Rushing have not found work yet. These are all young adults who have been or who have looked for work. What do they have in common? What methods are they using? All have mentioned in their interviews that they have used the internet as a resource to finding work.

However, what about their schools? Most colleges, if not all, have career centers for students to go to for help. But do students go to them? Branch and Rushing said no. Debidin has said that there is no help at all for students in her career field.

Jessica Irvin, a 23 year-old Hofstra University graduate, who has a degree in psychology. She went to a college career center in the past, but it wasn’t helpful. “I am going to try again to see what I might be able to get,” she said.

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College career centers are working hard to help their students achieve their career goals. Judy Nysten from the Pratt Institute, Barry Miller from Pace University and Diana Gruverman from New York University help prepare students for the work force at their schools.

Faced with the recession, Miller said, Pace University is “teaching them skills in alternative ways of finding a job, such as networking and on-line and off line resources, developing a compelling pitch and utilizing alumni mentors.”

Gruverman said that NYU “has been working overtime, developing strategies to help students find full-time jobs and internships in this increasingly challenging economic climate. This has included many job development campaigns along with partnerships with deans, faculty, and alumni.”

Nylen said that Pratt was doing unique things like “an ‘anti-depression’ dance party where we hopefully will connect students to the concept of networking and sources at which to network. We think there is enough sadness and panic going around and we don't want to contribute to it. Instead, it's important to clear your head and get positive.”

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Every student about to enter the workforce is wondering what they can do to beat the recession. These hard working advisors offer some advice to students.

“The secret to beating the recession is networking,” said Nylen. “If you know people and build relationships, you will hear about work opportunities.”

“Know how to describe your passion in two sentences,” Nylen continued. “I had a student last year who struck up a conversation while pumping gas. He mentioned his passion and involvement with design and by the end of the afternoon, had a job which he still has and has been promoted to design director for the company, six months later.”

It's good for students to know their product (themselves) and what they want. One must be positive, enthusiastic and prepared and look everywhere. One should be a consumer of work options. They should not second guess anything.

“I also know an alumnus who, at the beginning of a recession (which had not exactly been announced in the press yet) sent resumes for only jobs that he could get to on the L train. Needless to say he was unemployed for 18 months. You have to be flexible.”

Nylen stresses in quite a frank way what students have to do, “Students must take advantage of all Career Center and professional networking events. No ‘gee, I’m too busy.’ We schedule anything we want students to attend during time periods when there are no classes so that isn’t an excuse. Even if you do have a class, how many classes do you miss because you overslept or are hung over?”

“Change your behavior so you only miss classes for a professional reason and ask the professor in advance if it’s OK to miss class because of a career event.”

Miller of Pace University said, “Don’t spend so much time on job boards. Attend any workshops even if intended for alumni that enhance your job search skills.” Students can get help in developing a nontraditional resume which helps them to stand out from the crowd.

Students should utilize any mentor program that their university provides for informational interviews in fields they are interested in. Attending professional meetings which are open to students to meet people who work in their field of interest is also advised. This kind of network may know of internship and job opportunities that are not listed on job boards. Students could join on-line social networking sites such as Linked In, Facebook and Twitter, for more resources.

“We have strong presence on Facebook and Linked In as well as utilizing listservs and campus clubs.” he added.

Students who do not have the time to partake in Pace’s service have options. “There are many webinars and webcasts that are available for free whereby they can learn certain skills as resume development and job search skills. They can participate live and ask questions of the moderator and guests. There are those that they can download on to their iPod.” said Miller.

Gruverman said that NYU “encourages students to be proactive and flexible in their job search. This may include researching and targeting employers with areas that match your skills and interests, whether they have a job listed or not. We also encourage networking, both online and in person, with family, friends, former employers, professional organizations, NYU Alumni and the University community.”

Utilizing on-line professional networking sites to increase contacts, including linkedin.com, facebook.com, banyanlink.com and violetnet.nyu.edu, may also be helpful. Students should broaden the search to consider a variety of industries where you can put your skills to good use. NYU has published a list of “recession-proof” industries on their website to help guide students.

For those who want to utilize the internet in addition to their services on campus Gruverman advises, “On-Line Job Boards (such as NYU CareerNet, Monster.com, as well as specialty job-sites) can be an excellent way to identify job openings. Students can also post their resumes on many of these sites in order to give recruiters access to their credentials.”

There are many ways students can utilize the internet. Students can view on-line articles, obtain salary information, and track industry trends utilizing various career information websites (O*net, careeronestop.com, Occupational Outlook Handbook, payscale.com).

Students can also research positions and companies by visiting a company's website. With the help of on-line social networks, students can connect with potential employers and career mentors and practicing effective networking outreach.

Students have the option of making their resumes and creative projects visible to prospective employers by creating their own websites, or using on-line services specifically designed for this purpose. Students looking to break into writing positions, for example, can also use blogging as a way of giving their writing visibility and building a body of creative work.

Wasserman, NYU's career center, uses a web-based interview tool, InterviewStream, which enables students to video record their responses to practice interview questions and review their performance with peers or NYU staff, thereby obtaining constructive feedback for interviewing more effectively.

She gives these tips to students, to remember about looking for work, "Be flexible. Your first job will not be your last job, so consider opportunities that allow for growth of skills and increasing responsibilities. Think about preparing a two-minute pitch that highlights your most important skills and experiences. Practice this so you can use it when necessary. Set up informational interviews whenever possible. Volunteer, this is a great way to offer your skills and "give back."

“It is also a way to develop new skills and experiences for your resume, and to increase your networking contacts. Keep your energy level up and do not get discouraged. A job search is tough in any market, and it’s important not to take rejection personally. However, seek out feedback when appropriate, and try to learn from it.”

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Students will still have their own advice to give their fellow students.

“I guess the only thing I can say is sometimes you have to lower your standards of the job you are looking for. Don't be afraid to work in the mailroom because soon it can lead you to a better office job,” said Irvin.

Debidin said, “I know of many students that have graduated alongside me and are still unemployed. Having a degree doesn’t guarantee you a job. You invest so much money and time into a degree that you spend a decade or more paying off in school loans. In my field specifically, health care is thought to be recession proof but I am witnessing hospitals closing down and laying off people. You have to be more marketable in these times. In my case, this means furthering my education in different imaging modalities.”

Sample Query Letter

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April 28, 2009

Erle Norton
New York Post
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036-8790

Dear Mr. Norton:

As we continue on with the current recession, there is a generation of people who have a true worry about what the future holds for them: the current college students and recent graduates of today. Many of them are facing a job market which may not hold any promise to them as their jobs are given to those who have recently lost their jobs and have more experience than they do or there are simply just no jobs to give.

Magazines and newspapers are going to have articles about how to beat tuition cost and how people are going back to school to continue their education to find better jobs. You won't find many publications, however, talking to students and college career advisors about their thoughts on the recession and what they can do about the job market.

I would like to propose an article that features a few students from New York who have graduated or are about to graduate and advisors from three well-known colleges in New York City. This article will talk about how students are coping with the job market and the advice that the college career advisors suggest for students to do in order to ensure their place in the workforce.

You can reach me on my cell at 646-492-8483 or via email at christina.denise.rodriguez@gmail.com.

Thank you very much and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Christina Rodriguez