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## Opinion

### The future for college grads

#### Getting started on the inevitable job search

By Channing Jackson

Each New Year spawns a refreshed outlook on life, and for many college seniors that means finding the ideal job. Spring semester is a time when we are enjoying the last bit of winter, welcoming the spring showers and feeling the pressure to endure one more term before a long-awaited summer vacation. For seniors, the summer vacation is a distant memory replaced by the stress paying back student loans, getting a job to make parents proud or simply to finally make some real money. It's not easy finding the perfect job. Even if you find it, there is no guarantee you will get hired. Nonetheless, through searching the Internet, one can find experts that think they can help.

There is good news for college grads. About.com writer Alison Doyle reports in "Your Guide to Job Searching" that the job outlook for college grads is good this year. A CollegeGrad.com survey reports an increase in hiring by top entry-level employers. According to NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers), the job market for this year's graduating seniors is the best in years, with surveyed employers reporting that they expect to hire 17.4 percent more college graduates than last year.

The next question is, "What jobs are doing all the hiring?" According to Alison Doyle and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the fastest growing occupations for projected growth between now and 2014 are concentrated in the health and technology sectors. Home health aides lead the list, with a 56 percent increase. Next on the list are network systems analysts at 55 percent, followed by medical assistants with a 52 percent projected increase. Physician assistants can expect a 50 percent increase in job openings, while physical therapy assistant jobs are at 44 percent. Dental hygienists, computer software engineers and dental assistants are all projected to increase by 43 percent. Last on the list of the top ten fastest growing occupations are personal and home care aides at 41 percent.

For those of us who are not doctors or computer technicians, there is still hope. There is a cross-section of industries, including education, hospitality and health that lead the way for the largest potential growth. Retail leads the list with an increase of 736,000 new jobs by 2014. 703,000 registered nurses and 524,000 post-secondary teachers will be needed. Rounding off the list are operational managers and janitors.

Many graduating students have dreams of getting rich quickly. Bonuses paid out last year show trends that may help them realize their dreams. Jeff D. Opdyke from the Wall Street Journal Online reports that companies have been increasingly tying pay to performance in recent years in an effort to keep their fixed expenses as lean as possible, yet at the same time rewarding the most valuable workers. That provides companies the flexibility to rein in costs during tight years but to share the profits during abundant years. The industries that paid the highest bonuses are investment banking, compliance professionals, risk management professionals and law firms.

Now we know what jobs are growing and which ones are paying. But if none of those are for you, use the Internet to find the trends in your career of interest. Whichever career is for you, once you choose it, the next step is getting hired. This is perhaps the most intimidating part of the process. It includes compiling resumes, cover letters, interviewing, following-up and sending thank you letters. It involves precision, patience, a little luck and perhaps calling in a couple favors from contacts you met along the way. "It's not what you know but who you know," can be a sad and painful truth for eager college grads.

Here are a few ideas to help you. Enlist the aid of your college's career center. They can help you with a resume, employers that are looking to hire from your school and interviewing skills. This service is often free. During your study, you should gain experience by finding non-paying jobs like volunteering and internships. Consider seeking employment through a staffing agency. Such opportunities will allow you to gain experience without a commitment to one job or field.

Become familiar with the Internet. The Internet can help you find which jobs are on the rise, what employers are looking for and specific careers that fit your fancy. Knowledge of the Internet also provides you with skills to research a company before an interview. Employers often ask questions about their company to see if you know anything about it. A simple search looking at stock prices, recent trends, company policies and values can give you an advantage over others. It may also help you know what kind of environment you may be working in and what kind of person they are looking for. Some useful sites are collegegrad.com, collegerecruiter.com and collegehelpers.com.

Experts say the biggest tip is to start as early as possible. They say too many college students wait until they have graduated to start making decisions. Even those of us who have a couple more semesters can begin to think about the career we want. As the spring semester begins, we can start looking into what we want to do with our degrees. Once you find the right career for you, go for it. The only person that can stop you is yourself.

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