

Less decline, more optimism ahead for future college grads

by Eileen McGarry
Special for The Yell

What does the job market have in store for the class of 1993?

In the past three years the job market for college graduates has been at best uncertain and at worst glum. Still, students who prepared well for their careers and made a strong presentation in their interviews walked away with viable opportunities. As a future graduate, understanding what is happening in the job market and using that information wisely as you prepare for your future is an important step.

A recent study conducted by Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D., director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University helps to provide some insight. The publication entitled "RECRUITING TRENDS 1992/93... A Study of Businesses, Industries, and Governmental Agencies Employing New College Graduates," discusses the feedback received from 504 employers of college graduates responding to a nationwide survey.

According to this study, on-campus recruiting has decreased an average of 27 percent on campuses nationwide over the past three years. However, responses from employers indicate a glow economic recovery described as "less decline" in job opportunities for future college graduates. The decline in job



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opportunities is now predicted to be minus 2.1 percent over the next year as compared to minus 10 percent experienced in previous years. In 1991-92 only 9 percent of all college graduates interviewed on college campuses were hired for professional positions and increases in starting salaries have been kept to a bare minimum. Although South Eastern and north-central regions felt the effects the least, the recession could be felt by virtually all colleges nationwide. In spite of the experiences of recent

years, 77 percent of surveyed employers report a more optimistic outlook for 1993-94.

What has effected the job market for college graduates and how are employer's recruiting strategies changing in light of these factors?

The majority of employers who cut back on college recruiting said that reorganization within the company was the main reason. Most organizations were effected by down-sizing (63 percent) or layoffs (57 percent) and many of the positions lost were salaried positions.

As a result of the increased competition and fewer entry level professional positions, Career Services offices have seen some changes in recruiter's strategies. More companies ask to prescreen candidates by resume instead of allowing the career center to schedule the interviews.

Selection criteria has become more stringent requiring higher GPAs, specified course work or experience. Employers are also relying more on faculty contacts to advise them of their "strong students" as well as presentations to student organizations where they can identify student leaders. Many employers pursued the hiring of women and minorities more aggressively or were more apt to select campuses with higher minority populations canceling visits at other campuses. Several organizations expanded their cooperative educa-

tion and internship programs with a plan to build a base for future full time employees when the market improved. In lieu of cutbacks in recruiting, employers relied upon individual job listings & referrals, hourly positions and internal promotion paths to fill their existing openings. Many were able to hire candidates with 2 to 5 years experience for their entry level positions.

When asked how changing work environments were effecting employer needs, surveyed employers described increased computerization as the biggest factor making computer knowledge mandatory. Client server computers, personal computers, computerized inventory and distribution systems, on line engineering design drawing and automated production are among the systems drastically changing how work is processed. Increasing orientation toward customer satisfaction, better marketing, and refined interpersonal skills has greatly influenced the qualities employers seek as companies strive to stay competitive in the global marketplace.

Employees in the '90s will be required to accept a broader range of tasks, relocate for promotions and work overtime when necessary. Emphasis on teamwork, work groups, self directed team building, TQM and coaching versus supervision are descriptive of the changing work styles to which employees must

adapt.

Following is the list of problems employers said they faced in recruiting college graduates:

- student's unrealistic expectations about starting positions
 - need for more career related experience in candidates they interviewed
 - too many graduates under-prepared for the interview and uninformed about the company's with which they interview
 - finding recruits with enthusiasm, real interest in careers available and initiative to follow up after the interview
 - finding enough majors in engineering, retailing, business and physical sciences as well as MBAs with technical undergraduate degrees
 - gaining access to "the Best academic" students when the pool seemed to be shrinking. - lack of minority and women candidates where needed
 - notable lack of oral and written communication skills
- Surveyed employers were asked about what they considered to be outstanding interview characteristics. Most important were smile, good humor, professional attitude, eagerness, enthusiasm, professional dress and neatness. Also mentioned were being well spoken, clear enunciation, diction, relaxed unnerved pose, confident (not cocky) attitude, politeness, sincerity and

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