

Campus CAREER COUNSELOR

The Eyes and Ears of the Career Services Profession

Career Centers Borrow "Reality TV" Concept to Grab Students' Attention

By Peter Vogt

Ever since they came on the television scene more than five years ago, "reality" shows like "Survivor," "The Apprentice," and "American Idol" have thrived thanks to the under-30 set—young adults, many of them college students, who gravitate to the chance to not only **watch** something exciting but also **participate** in it.

Perhaps it's no wonder, then, that a few college/university career services professionals are putting their own spins on the reality TV concept—and having great success in the process.

"Reality Bites"

Two years ago, Florida Atlantic University career counselor Carolyn Stewart was looking for a creative way to give FAU students a real taste of the job search experience.

That's when—and why—she came up with **Reality Bites: The Real Corporate Experience**, a program that combines the best elements of reality TV and experiential learning.

Students who want to participate in the program submit applications that include:

- Their resume.
- A copy of a current job posting that relates to their major.
- A videotape of themselves explaining their qualifications for a corporate job.

From this pool, six students are selected (by a panel of employers) to take part in the program's various events—an informational interviewing experience, a wardrobe shopping excursion, a business luncheon, a company tour, and real job interviews—all of which are videotaped.

That footage eventually becomes part of a television program that can be seen on FAU's student-run station, Owl TV. The program's finale—where the six participants are questioned by judges in front of a live audience at a campus auditorium—is also videotaped and then shown on Owl TV.

"The diversity packaged into the Reality Bites experi-

ence surpasses that of any career-based program prior because it incorporates all of the components of career development into a complete package," says Stewart, associate director of the career center at FAU's Broward campus.

"Additionally," she says, "because each stage is filmed and televised, students in area high schools and colleagues from other institutions are able to apply the principles to develop similar programs."

In the program's first year (2004), 18 FAU students applied for the six finalist spots. This past year, more than 60 students applied.

"The Intern"

Thanks to a bit of serendipity, the Rutgers University (NJ) career center was able to tap the "reality fever" that was already sweeping across the campus when Rutgers alum Randal Pinkett was featured on NBC's "The Apprentice."

It was then that the career center launched its own rendition of the program: **The Intern**.

"Reality"
continued on page 6

Inside This Issue

July 2006

In the News.....2

Homeland security sector is hiring more new grads; employers battle grads' propensity to bounce

Good Ideas.....4

Video features job search advice of local employers; "hands-on" career fair lets students explore options

Employer Insights..7

The parents of college students: How far will their involvement go?

Book Reviews.....8

What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens; Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads

Research Briefs....10

Trauma impacts students' career decision making; supervisors make all the difference for interns

Pete's Column.....12

What's "old" is new again ... and again

"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."

~ Milton Berle

IN THE NEWS

Homeland Security Sector Is Hiring More New Grads

More and more of today's new college graduates are finding jobs in the emerging field of homeland security, according to a recent article in *The Courier-Journal* (KY).

Not all of those jobs are in the public sector, either.

Case in point: Bowling Green, Kentucky-based Government Systems Inc., a firm that designs high-tech equipment for the military and other government agencies.

GSI recently hired two Western Kentucky University engineering grads, Tommy Rippy and Michael Howard, who had devoted three years of their college lives to building a robot that can detect tunnels—like the ones drug smugglers, illegal immigrants, or terrorists might dig.

Now Rippy and Howard are being paid \$38,000 a year each to do the kinds of things they did for free in college.

"It sounded cool because you work on things that are kind of classified," says Howard. "And the privilege of working on things that other people aren't allowed to see is neat."

Today's college students can seek out homeland security jobs involving military activities, customs enforcement, disaster preparation, and disease prevention. Moreover, they can target both state and federal government agencies as well as the private sector in their job searches.

At the University of Kentucky, for example, 17 com-

panies and government agencies with homeland security-related missions recruited students at the school's career center prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Since then, that number has skyrocketed to 57.

Source: *The Courier-Journal* (KY), July 6, 2006.

More New Grads Deciding to Delay the "Real World"

The number of college students who don't necessarily want to jump into a full-time career immediately after graduation appears to be growing, according to a recent article in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

"One of our most popular workshops is, basically, 'What can I do after college besides work full time or go to grad school?'" says Kathy Sims, director of the career center at the University of California-Los Angeles.

The workshop is offered at least once a quarter, Sims says, and it's usually full.

"There's a wealth of opportunities for graduates who just want a short-term experience," she stresses. "Our job is to mine them and help students find them."

Student interest certainly justifies those efforts. Take Johannes Seywerd, for example, who recently graduated from the University of Vermont. He's spending the summer teaching sailing on Lake Champlain. After that, he hopes to find a short-term gig teaching at an interna-

tional school in Europe—all while he studies to take the entrance exam for dental school, which is another possibility he's exploring.

"I'm giving myself the opportunity to have a vague idea about what it is that I'm going to be doing in life," says Seywerd. "I understand there's uncertainty involved with that. ... But that's a risk I'm willing to take."

Not unreasonable, or unwise, argues Pam Gardner, director of career services at the University of Vermont.

"There really are more decisions for these students to make than there were ... 20 years ago, so in some ways, it's very adaptive," she says.

Source: *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 1, 2006.

MBA Grads Enjoy Outstanding Job Prospects This Year

The job market for this year's MBA graduates is a refreshing change from that of recent years past, according to two surveys conducted by the Graduate Management Admission Council.

"Bottom line is, every way you look at it, the boom is back on the MBA," says David Wilson, the Council's president and CEO.

For starters, salaries for MBA grads are up 4.2 percent over 2005, to \$92,360 this year, according to a GMAC survey of more than 6,000 MBA students. Moreover, two-thirds of this year's MBA grads are receiving signing bonuses, which are averaging

Grade Differences Don't Seem to Carry Over to Job Search

Female college students are academically outperforming males on many campuses these days, but the difference seems to have little if any impact on students' job search success (or lack thereof).

"I don't see employers preferring male students over female students, or female students over male students," says Judith Claire, director of career services at Bryant University (RI). "Employers are looking at many different factors, including—but not limited to—grades."

Still, the data are intriguing. At the University of Rhode Island, for example, 70 percent of the honors degrees handed out this year went to women. At Brown University, 30 percent of female students graduated with honors this year, compared with just 24 percent of men.

Source: *Kitsap Sun* (WA), July 25, 2006.

IN THE NEWS

\$17,603 (a slight increase over last year).

Additionally, employers expect that they'll end up hiring 18 percent more new MBA grads this year than last, according to a GMAC survey of 1,270 recruiters. The grads who will be most in demand: those with expertise in finance and/or marketing.

But MBA grads aren't likely to get as far if they don't have solid soft skills to complement their academic knowledge and work experience, the GMAC recruiter survey found.

Indeed, nearly 40 percent of the employers questioned said they place significant weight on soft skills—such as leadership potential and communication skills—when evaluating and judging the MBA candidates they interview.

Sources: Graduate Management Admission Council news releases, May 19 and March 28, 2006; *The Dallas Morning News*, May 7, 2006.

HR Students Who Want to Get Ahead: Consider Temping

College students who eventually want to work in human resources may not be aware of the many opportunities they have to gain hands-on experience—and essential contacts—by temping in the field during their college years.

About 40 percent of HR-related temp positions are geared to people who have less than three years of experience in the field, according to Valerie Stinson, director of

temp agency HR Extras in Portland, Oregon.

“When you're coming out of college with an HR degree, it's hard to get a job when the market is flooded with thousands of people with two or three years [or more] of HR experience,” says Bill Kasko, president of Frontline Source Group, a temp firm in Dallas.

Temping “is a terrific way to jump to the head of the line in the hiring process,” adds James Essey, president and CEO of New York City-based staffing firm TemPositions.

“Entry-level HR professionals are not forced to send resumes and hope they are selected for an interview. Instead, they are put to work in front of the hiring manager. If they do a good job, they are almost guaranteed to be hired for open positions.”

Some HR specialties are better than others when it comes to the number of temp jobs available. Temp positions in training, for example, are relatively scarce. But significant demand does exist in areas like benefits, compensation, and general HR.

Source: *HR Magazine*, February 2006.

Employers Battle Grads' Propensity to Bounce Around

Even though employers this year have often found themselves competing to hire the best new college grads, many of them say they're facing a bigger problem over the long haul: keeping their new-grad employees around.

Today's new grads tend not to be worried about staying in their first post-college positions for, say, five years, or even two or three years.

“There's no longer a stigma in changing jobs frequently,” says Eileen Kohan, executive director of the career center at the University of Southern California. “It's not unnatural for someone to have several jobs in their first five years out of college.”

That's a problem as far as employers are concerned—especially since replacing an employee who lasts only a year or so costs about one and a half times that worker's salary, according to Saratoga, a division of PriceWaterhouse Coopers.

Some companies are trying to combat the trend by launching special retention initiatives for Generation Y employees. Ogilvy Public Relations, for instance, offers a one-year rotational program that gives new-grad hires the chance to check out several roles in the firm before settling on one permanently.

Still, some Gen Y employees continue to go from job to job. Case in point: Paul O'Leary, a 2004 Stanford University grad who, at age 25, is on job No. 5.

“I have a pretty clear idea of what I want to get out of my career,” he says. “When it gets to the point where the management or the company no longer seems in line with what I have in mind, I start looking elsewhere.”

Source: *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 2006.

Lack of Accounting Grads Hits Hard in New Orleans Area

Like they have been for the last several years, employers around the country are competing fiercely for talented new accounting graduates.

But nowhere are things tougher than they are in New Orleans, which is still reeling from the devastation brought on by Hurricane Katrina last summer.

“Nobody wants to come here,” says James LaPorte, managing partner of Ericksen, Krental and LaPorte LLP, one of the largest accounting firms in the city. “But yet there is so much opportunity here.”

Most of the accountants in the New Orleans area are working 10, 20, or even more hours a week beyond the usual 40—while in many cases trying to get their personal lives back in order as well.

But many of the area's new accounting grads have left to launch their careers in other cities, according to Barbara Apostolou, chair of the accounting department at Louisiana State University.

“If you're coming out of college and you have offers in Houston, Atlanta, and New Orleans, where are you going to go?” says Apostolou. “It's a question of how long the industry can hold on. There's no housing here.”

Source: *New Orleans City Business*, July 24, 2006.

GOOD IDEAS

Videos Feature Job Search Advice from Local Employers

The career center at Bismarck State College (ND) has teamed up with Job Service of North Dakota and several local organizations to develop a set of professionally produced videos that allow BSC students to get job interviewing advice from a most credible source: employers.

The **Job Seekers Advantage** videos feature human resources personnel from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Medcenter One Health Systems, and several other area companies who all cover—in their own unique way—three topics: preparing for interviews, doing well in the interview itself, and following up after interviews.

“The premise behind using videos [featuring] local employers was to educate students and community job seekers about what real human resources staff view as important in all facets of applying for employment,” says Jay Meier, director of counseling and career services at Bismarck State.

“The impact is greater,” Meier stresses, “when employers are involved and are indicating the importance of certain skills necessary for seeking employment.”

So far, student reactions to the videos have been “quite positive,” Meier says.

“A common statement has been that ‘everyone is saying the same thing,’” Meier notes. “In my opinion, that’s a great indicator to students that em-

ployers are looking for the same behavioral skills no matter what occupation they may enter.”

The videos are accessible, for free, on the BSC career center’s web site at: www.bsc.nodak.edu/student/career/jobseekers.asp.

Event Preps Juniors for Their Upcoming Internship Hunts

Boston College offers an innovative one-day program that helps the school’s juniors start their internship-search and other career-related activities sooner vs. later.

Career Launch is always held the Friday before BC’s winter break ends, according to Amy Donegan, associate director of BC’s career center. Open to all juniors at no cost, the event is intended to get participants ready for their impending searches for summer internships—and, later on, post-graduation jobs.

The program functions like a professional conference, Donegan says, with employer-led breakout sessions that run concurrently (though they’re all repeated throughout the day so that students don’t miss anything).

“We’ve also featured a panel of either alumni or seniors to discuss either the job or internship search and share their experiences with the entire process,” says Donegan. “The [breakout] sessions have included resume writing or resume critiques, behavioral interviewing, etiquette for the job search and workplace, and

effective networking.”

Another of the event’s nice touches: Students who live in campus housing can return to school a night early so they can participate.

If student evaluations of the program are any indication, the investment they—and career services professionals and employers—make in the event more than pays off.

“Many students have proclaimed that if they hadn’t heard it from other students and employers, they never would have realized how much they need to do to get ready for this process,” says Donegan.

“Hands-On Career Fair” Lets Students Experience Options

Each spring, the career center at Hartnell College (CA) teams up with several other departments to hold an innovative **Hands-On Career & Employment Fair**—open to the college’s own students as well as the general public.

“The purpose of the fair is twofold: career and employment,” says Denise Moss, director of career and workforce development at the school.

The “career” employers are recruited to provide hands-on activities, Moss says, so that participants can explore possible fields like firefighting, construction, law enforcement, cooking, hospitality, nursing, real estate, and information technology.

The “employment” employers, meanwhile, “are recruited specifically because

“Get a Job, Dude” Events Boost Career Center’s Visibility

It’s hard for students not to remember the campus career center when its staff members travel across campus in a sixties-style van—only to end up standing next to a life-size cut-out of Austin Powers.

It’s all part of the Appalachian State University (NC) career center’s **“Get a Job, Dude” Career Caravan**, an ongoing effort to make the center more visible to ASU students—and help students see campus career counselors as the approachable people they are.

Staffers dress in tie-dyed T-shirts and jeans for the informal events, which take place in academic buildings around campus. They also use magnetized, multicolored flowers and banners to decorate an old school van—which transports them **“very noticeably”** across campus, says Marjorie Ellis, interim director of ASU’s Career Development Center.

GOOD IDEAS

they have entry-level and midlevel openings available,” Moss says. “The employers are recruited from industries related to educational tracks offered by Mission Trails ROP [Regional Occupational Program] and Hartnell College.”

The most recent fair, held on April 19, attracted more than 1,000 attendees who could, among other things, take part in massage therapy and cosmetology demonstrations; participate in a nail driving competition led by carpenter apprentices; and watch the Seaside Fire Department use its “Jaws of Life” tool.

Innovative Co-op Puts Students in the Driver’s Seat

The School of Business career center at Dalhousie University (Nova Scotia) has teamed up with Dalhousie’s Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship to offer Dal students an innovative co-op experience.

Entrepreneurial Work Term gives participating students a chance to pursue their own business ventures—instead of someone else’s—while fulfilling the various cooperative education requirements for their degree, says JoAnne Akerboom, director of School of Business Career & Alumni Services.

“Students must complete an application form and then present their business idea and learning plan to a panel of judges consisting of faculty, staff, and [members of the]

business community,” says Akerboom. “The panel provides feedback to assist the student(s) in having the best possible entrepreneurial experience.”

Throughout the ensuing four-month work term, students must submit weekly journal entries to the business coaches who advise them. At the end of the term, the students present again to a panel of judges, who score them on how well they’ve met their projections and achieved their learning goals.

“The feedback from the students who have participated in the Entrepreneurial Work Term demonstrates that it has been one of their most profound learning and work experiences,” Akerboom says.

“The students have commented that the skills they’ve developed in an Entrepreneurial Work Term far outweigh those they gain in the traditional work term because they have to self-motivate and have better time management skills than when they’re working for someone else.”

Internship Program Gets MIT Freshmen off to an Early Start

The career center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology coordinates a yearlong initiative that combines the best elements of a career development course, career exploration and job search activities, and hands-on experience.

The **Freshman/Alumni Summer Internship Pro-**

gram (F/ASIP) brings participating students, alums, and employers together “in meaningful and mutually beneficial interactions,” according to program director Heather Bois Bruskin of MIT’s Careers Office.

Incoming MIT freshmen can apply for F/ASIP the summer before they begin school. The program gets under way in the fall via a six-unit seminar that features workshops every month or so throughout the student’s freshman year.

“The first semester focuses more specifically on internship preparation,” Bruskin stresses, “while the second semester’s seminars focus on how to prepare the students to be successful interns.”

Ultimately, the students in the program research, apply for, and obtain internships for the summer following their freshman year. During those internships, participants must write one journal entry per month where they reflect on their experiences.

“The program also matches the student with a mentor—ideally an MIT alumnus—at their internship site to serve as an additional resource during their work experience,” Bruskin notes.

When the students return to MIT in the fall of their sophomore year, they give brief presentations on their internships to both their peers and the F/ASIP staff.

The program gives freshmen “a taste of the professional world,” Bruskin says, “as well as a strong foundation for future jobs.”

Workshop Helps Students Explore Idea of “Selling Out”

Tammy Fraser was noticing that some of her students were worried about “selling out” after college—pursuing and/or taking jobs that didn’t match up with their personal values.

So the Bennington College (VT) career counselor decided to develop a workshop, **Making a Living Without Selling Out**, to help students discuss and address their concerns.

Participants discuss what it means to “sell out” and grapple with the key concept of compromise, Fraser says, ultimately learning that “all jobs will require some level of compromise.”

Fraser has only run the workshop a few times so far, but she says it’s one of her best-attended sessions (“usually around 10, which is big for a small liberal arts college of 550,” she notes).

“Additionally, I have had a few alums who did the workshop as seniors contact me and let me know that now that they’re out [of college], they are very glad to have been challenged with these questions,” Fraser says.

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Our hope is that when other students ‘tune in’ online, they will identify with the candidates.

**“Reality”
continued from page 1**

The Intern leverages the career center’s web site to follow five Rutgers juniors as they search for summer internships, says Rutgers career counselor Eva Kubu.

“The program chronicles the students’ experiences as they go through the process of learning and applying various job search strategies,” says Kubu.

“Each week, our five candidates post journal entries detailing the activities they participated in and share their

feelings and reactions to every phase of the internship search. Our hope is that when other students ‘tune in’ online, they will identify with the candidates and learn from their experiences.”

Rutgers students can track the progress of the Intern participants by visiting the program’s extensive web site: careerservices.rutgers.edu/intern.html.

The participants’ journal entries are particularly intriguing, giving readers a glimpse of not only the ups but also the occasional downs of the internship search.

This past academic year, all five Intern participants ultimately succeeded in landing summer positions—and “our department,” Kubu adds, “was able to get our message across to students in a different, interesting, and more interactive format.”

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He had just abandoned a sinking ship—which was a good thing—but without even a life jacket—which was a bad thing.

It’s True—Networking Really *Is* the Best Way to Land the Job You Want!

By Pamela Braun

My husband, Chris, embarked on a job search recently. But don’t assume that, just because he’s married to a career counselor, his was a well executed, leisurely examination of opportunities in his field.

No, it was more along the lines of “call your wife in the middle of the day to report that you’ve just quit your job, then jump into the most gimmicky and trite job search methods available.”

Chris is a reasonably intelligent creature. But he was in panic mode. He had just abandoned a sinking ship—which was a good thing—but without even a life jacket (otherwise known as a potential job lead) in sight—which was a bad thing.

Lost in Cyberspace

Upon arriving home, Chris immediately sat down in front of the computer and registered on an assortment of

hackneyed job search sites that trumpet immediate results with minimal effort. And the job prospects and opportunities for interviews began to roll in—immediately and in great numbers.

Unfortunately, because of the job sites’ keyword matching strategies, literally every opportunity that was emailed to Chris was a non-match for his career ambitions. None of them was even close.

After some initial disappointment, a little pep talk from me, and some organization analysis, Chris decided to exert a modicum of control over his job search: He went online and searched for opportunities with companies that were specific to his field.

The job prospects were fewer and the opportunities to interview slower to materialize. But the emails that did come in were appropriate; he actually landed a few leads.

Still, with bills looming, Chris was looking for a method that promised more

immediate results.

It was then that his professional organization held its annual networking luncheon.

Luncheon Leads

Chris registered for the event; went to it armed with resumes; and came home with business cards for follow up, leads on people to contact, and a couple of scheduled interviews.

Securing a full-time position that was appropriate for his level of experience and his salary expectations still took some time. But Chris learned a couple of key lessons—lessons our students need to understand too:

1) By taking full control of your job search and not relegating responsibility to cyberspace, you’ll almost certainly generate more appropriate and more viable leads.

2) Networking—done in a way you’re comfortable with—really **is** the most effective job search strategy around.

EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

The Parents of College Students: How Far Will Their Involvement Go?

Each month, we interview an employer about a key career issue college students—and career services professionals—need to better understand ... from the employer's perspective.

The Employer: Allison Keeton, College Relations Director for St. Paul Travelers, one of the country's leading property casualty insurers.

The Issue: Employers have serious concerns when they hear from students' parents.

In a recent Wall Street Journal article, you said you're taking many calls these days from the parents of college students and new grads.

Just how many contacts are you having with parents? Are things really that different today compared to, say, five or 10 years ago?

We have not been logging the calls, so I cannot speak to the actual number of calls we're receiving from parents. However, I can say that this is the **first** year we have ever received a call from a parent, and they have been calling for a variety of reasons:

1) To indicate their student's interest in a company or a job. (We ask that they have their child call us themselves.)

2) To follow up on the status of a student's job candidacy. (We tell them that information is confidential but that we would be happy to talk with the student directly.)

3) To negotiate a higher salary. (We tell them that information is confidential but that we would be happy to talk with the student directly.)

On the flip side, we have had students (even at the graduate level) send us e-mails which start, "My parents and I ..."

I wish I could say these incidents are isolated, but they are not. This is the same pattern we have been seeing nationwide, and for a variety of positions and skill sets.

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Can [these students] be responsible, creative, and reliable employees on their own?

We are accustomed to our employees networking for their children, neighbors, and others. The parents we are describing (above) are not known to us or the company.

While participating in peer focus groups, I have learned that a *Fortune* 100 company is considering working with **parents** of college freshmen and sophomores to win over the parents first in an effort to influence the students.

Can you pinpoint exactly why it's so troubling for you and other employers to be hearing from parents? What's the big deal?

For those of us in recruiting, many questions arise. For example: At what point will the parents' involvement stop? Will they want to sit in on performance evaluations? If the employee is given a performance warning, will the parent call us to complain or follow up? If we change our benefits package, will the parents want to weigh in?

The broader question to consider is whether these students have been raised to be independent thinkers or whether they will look to us as employers to be their new "parents." Can they be responsible, creative, and reliable employees on their own?

What, specifically, can Campus Career Counselor readers do to address with their students (and perhaps students' parents!) the issues you've raised here?

Begin by pointing out this type of behavior to students and explain why an employer is turned off by it. I'm sure that many students aren't aware that heavy parental involvement is a problem—having grown up in an environment where that's been a constant.

It would also be helpful if *Campus Career Counselor* readers could educate parents about how their behavior is perceived in a negative way by employers.



Allison Keeton is College Relations Director of St. Paul Travelers. In this role, she is responsible for publicizing and promoting St. Paul Travelers as a potential employer to colleges throughout the country.

She is also responsible for developing campus marketing materials and building and maintaining relationships with key contacts on college campuses. In addition, she oversees a staff that is charged with college recruitment and candidate generation.

Allison joined Travelers Property Casualty Corp., now St. Paul Travelers, in 1998 as College Relations Director. Prior to St. Paul Travelers, she worked in a variety of jobs within the banking industry—from management trainee to employee relations manager. She was also a human resources consultant at Northeast Utilities and at The Hartford Insurance Company, both in Hartford, Connecticut.

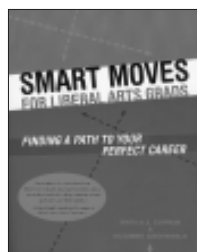
Allison earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in management and human resources development from the University of Connecticut. She serves on the advisory boards for Career Services and the College of Continuing Studies at the university.

www.stpaultravelers.com

BOOK REVIEWS



What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens: Discovering Yourself, Defining Your Future, Richard Nelson Bolles, Carol Christen, and Jean M. Blomquist, Ten Speed Press, 2006 (\$14.95, paperback)



Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads: Finding a Path to Your Perfect Career, Sheila J. Curran and Suzanne Greenwald, Ten Speed Press, 2006 (\$16.95, paperback)

What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens

Review by Pamela Braun

Richard Bolles has done it again—only this time, he’s done it just for young people and with a little help from his friends.

In *What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens*, Bolles and co-authors Carol Christen and Jean Blomquist attempt to get young people thinking about and able to identify their life’s calling.

“We want to give you the skills necessary to find out what it is you love to do, and to find a job where you can do just that,” the authors explain.

The book delivers through its clearly laid-out chapters featuring uncomplicated activities that our students will actually do. My suggestion: Put some duct tape over the “*For Teens*” phrase in the title and make the activities in this book available to students and alums of all ages.

What makes this version of *Parachute* more appealing than the “regular” version? The straightforward approach the authors use to present their concepts and activities.

Maybe, as adults, we’re supposed to be more introspective. But consider the returning adult student who has been out of work for six months, has bills to pay, and needs insurance coverage for herself and her family. Now ponder the response you’ll likely get when you suggest that in order for her to find

her next ideal career, she needs to begin mapping her dream job starting with childhood ambitions.

Not going to happen!

Adults can be reflective, but they can also find themselves in career situations where they need to act quickly. Young people can also be reflective, but give them too much information—i.e., the “regular” *Parachute*—and you risk confusing them (or, worse, losing them altogether).

What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens wisely cuts to the chase, focusing only on the most relevant information readers will need—and in a format that will encourage them to participate in their own career development.



Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads

Review by Peter Vogt

It isn’t often anymore that you run into a career book that’s truly different. But *Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads* qualifies and then some.

Unlike the nuts-and-bolts approach you find in the typical career book, *Smart Moves* taps into the detailed stories of real job seekers—namely, 23 relatively recent college graduates who share their career journeys with the reader.

As they do, authors Sheila Curran (executive director of the career center at Duke University) and Suzanne Green-

wald (an educational advisor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) point out the “smart moves” the graduates have made along the way, so that readers can easily pick up on both the attitudes and behaviors that lead to career success—even when you don’t have a plan mapped out ahead of time (which describes the vast majority of those profiled in the book).

The authors also devote the first 40 or so pages of the book to the universal “smart moves” made by liberal arts graduates who go on to career success. The most critical is No. 5: “Find Your Hook”—i.e., “a way to differentiate [yourself] from other job seekers”—whether it’s a special skill you have or a unique experiential background that you bring to the table.

The authors also address, albeit briefly, an issue that is increasingly coming into play in career centers (and companies) around the country: students’ parents. (Clue: The title of the section, “The Blessings and Curses of Parents,” tells you all you need to know!)

The only aspect of *Smart Moves* that is even remotely disappointing is the relative lack of diversity of the **schools** attended by those profiled. It would have been nice to read about more graduates of public, not-quite-so-selective colleges and universities.

But if you love stories—especially stories that will illustrate important concepts to the students and grads you work with—buying *Smart Moves* is, well, a smart move.

RESOURCES

WITHIN REASON

Each month, we highlight several low- or no-cost resources you can use yourself, pass along to the students or recent graduates you work with, or both. Enjoy!

DVD Highlights Asian Americans in Broadcast Careers

The Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) has created a new DVD that encourages Asian-American college students and others to consider a career in broadcast journalism.

“More Than a Job” features six Asian-American journalists from across the United States who share their unique stories with viewers. And in a unique twist, the DVD also features interviews with the proud parents of each of the featured journalists.

AAJA produced the DVD to address a troubling trend: a several-year decline in the number of Asian Americans working in broadcast newsrooms across the country.

The DVD costs \$5.

Contact: AAJA National Office, Attn: “More Than a Job” DVD, 1182 Market St., Suite 320, San Francisco, CA 94102. Phone: 415-346-2051. Email: national@aja.org. Web: www.aja.org.

Article Describes Whats, Whys of Doing Internships

Even though we as career practitioners talk about internships all the time—as though they’re common knowledge—it’s important to remember that, for many of our students, internships are anything but “old hat.”

That’s what makes a recent

article in *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* so handy.

“Internships: Previewing a Profession” takes college students (and other readers) through all the basics of internships—from who should pursue internships and where internships are located to which internships are best and how one applies for internship opportunities.

The article, which appears in the Summer 2006 edition of *OOQ*, is available online (for free) at: www.bls.gov/opus/ooq/2006/summer/art02.pdf.

College Art Group’s Web Site Features Career Resources

The College Art Association devotes an entire section of its web site to a wide assortment of tools and resources that will help college students who are interested in pursuing careers in such sectors as art history, museums, or the visual arts.

The “Careers” section of the site features, among other things, sample curriculum vitae for artists, art historians, museum professionals, and visual artists; job openings related to art history, studio art, and other artistic endeavors; and awards, grants, and fellowships for students and others who seek professional and/or educational opportunities in the field.

Visit: www.collegeart.org/careers.

Article Challenges the “Law School by Default” Mentality

A recent *CollegeJournal* article raises questions about a common refrain among college students considering law school: that a law degree will, if nothing else, give them lots of possibilities to consider.

“When I went to law school,” says author Cameron Stracher, “nearly everyone tried to convince me that doing so would ‘keep my options open.’ All this really means is: ‘You can still be a lawyer.’”

In the article (“The Case Against Law School by Default”), Stracher says new lawyers are “dropping like flies” and that, as such, “Perhaps it’s time to rethink the whole ‘law school by default’ mentality that infects so many otherwise sane young minds.”

Access Stracher’s article at: www.collegejournal.com/salarydata/law/20060627-stracher.html.

Article Discusses Employer Struggles with Generation Y

The May 2006 issue of *HR Magazine* features an article that will help you better understand the challenges employers face in working with their Millennial/Gen Y hires.

“Managing Generation Y” is available at: www.shrm.org/hrmagazine/articles/0506/0506managementtools.asp.

Web Site Features Animal-Related Internship Options

The students you work with who are interested in animal-related careers will love the “Job Listings” section of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association web site.

The site does an especially good job of including not only full-time positions but also internship and volunteer opportunities.

Visit: www.aza.org/JobListings.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Trauma Impacts Students' Career Decision Making

College students who have experienced some sort of trauma—either recently or in the distant past—might well struggle with dysfunctional beliefs that make it difficult for them to make sound career decisions, according to a recent study in *The Career Development Quarterly*.

The study involved 131 college students who completed several assessments: the *Career Thoughts Inventory*, *My Vocational Situation*, the *Developmental Work Personality Scale*, and the *Los Angeles Symptom Checklist* (which was used to identify potential symptoms of trauma).

The researchers found, among other things, that “increased levels of trauma symptoms may negatively affect the three major aspects of the career development process, specifically, developmental work personality, vocational identity, and career thoughts.”

Moreover, the researchers concluded, “[A]s trauma symptoms increase, so does the level of dysfunctional career thoughts.” The possible result: a barrier that may prevent the student from making effective career decisions.

The researchers encourage career practitioners at colleges and universities (and elsewhere) to become familiar with the key symptoms of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), so that students who have experienced trauma in their lives

can pursue personal counseling to address the underlying issues—issues that are probably getting in the way of healthy career development.

Source: David R. Strauser, Daniel C. Lustig, Pamela A. Cogdal, and Ayse Ciftci Uruk (2006). “Trauma Symptoms: Relationship with Career Thoughts, Vocational Identity, and Developmental Work Personality.” *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54(4) (June), pp. 346-360.

Stress from Family Conflict Linked to Career Indecision

College students of color who are in psychological distress—particularly due to family-related conflict(s)—are more likely to wrestle with career indecision than are their peers who are not in psychological distress, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Career Assessment*.

The study involved 329 students—101 of them African Americans, 134 Asian Americans, and 94 Latino/Latina Americans. Each student was asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire; a portion of the *Family Conflicts Scale*; the *Career Decision Scale*; the *Career Aspiration Scale*; and the *Brief Symptom Inventory*.

The key finding, according to researchers Madonna Constantine and Lisa Flores: For each of the ethnic subsamples, “[W]e found that greater levels of psychological distress predicted higher levels of career indecision,

which in turn were associated with lower career certainty and greater perceived family conflict.”

Constantine and Flores also suggest that “family tensions may escalate when young adults of color do not know what they want to do with regard to career and are unable to commit to an area of study that will lead to gainful employment in the long term.”

Thus, the authors conclude, career practitioners who work with students of color should help them explore and understand their families’ attitudes about careers and career decision making.

“Counselors are encouraged to assess the degree to which the family is affected,” Constantine and Flores write, “and, if noted, may consider working with students of color on how to communicate effectively their career dilemmas with family members and to seek help and support from them with regard to career decisions.”

Source: Madonna G. Constantine and Lisa Y. Flores (2006). “Psychological Distress, Perceived Family Conflict, and Career Development Issues in College Students of Color.” *Journal of Career Assessment*, 14(3) (August), pp. 354-369.

Supervisors Make All the Difference for Student Interns

If the employers your career center works with really want to do themselves—and their student interns—a favor,

Internships Boost Starting Salaries of New-Graduate Hires

When you run into those students who question the value of, or the need for, internship experience, tell them that—among many other benefits—they’ll likely see a financial return on their investment.

In a recent survey of employers conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 46.2 percent of the respondents said they offer higher starting salaries to new college grads who have done internships.

Of that group, more than half said their organizations add a set percentage—6.8 percent, on average—to the starting salaries of new-grad hires with internship experience.

Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers news release, June 28, 2006.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

they'll make sure those interns get the management/supervisory attention they crave, according to a recent study by Scott Resource Group.

In the study, which surveyed 381 undergraduate interns, students were asked to quantify the importance of 24 different internship factors (e.g., "I was treated like a full-time employee," "My manager valued my being there") using a 10-point scale (with 10 being the highest level of agreement).

First, the students were asked about the **expectations** they'd had about each factor before their internships had begun. They were then asked to evaluate their actual **experiences** during their internships, so that researchers could calculate both an average "expectation rating" and an average "reality rating" for each of the 24 factors.

The three factors for which the gap between students' expectations and reality was highest all involved supervision/management. For example, the factor with the greatest disparity between expectations (8.71) and reality (7.25) was "My manager was prepared for my internship," which had a "gap" of +1.46.

The factor with the second-highest disparity (+1.02) was "I was satisfied with the quality/frequency of my performance reviews," while the factor with the third-highest disparity (+0.97) was "I was challenged by my internship assignment."

"The clear implication of these findings is this," notes

an executive summary of the study's results: "That whereas strong internship program management can mitigate expectation shortfalls, it's the interns' assignment managers who are the deal makers/breakers—because they themselves model what it's really like to work for the company."

Source: *Benchmarking Internship Expectations vs. Reality*, "Executive Summary," Scott Resource Group, May 2006. To learn more, visit: www.scottresourcegroup.com.

Employers\$ Have Lots\$ of Reasons\$ to Be Fu\$\$y in Hiring

If the college seniors you work with ever wonder aloud why employers are "picky" or "fussy" about who they hire, remind them of just how much money is on the line.

A recent Right Management Consultants study will help you make your point. The survey, which involved 444 organizations throughout North America, found that, on average, it costs a company two and a half times an employee's salary to replace that employee if he/she doesn't work out.

That figure takes into account recruitment, training, and severance costs along with lost productivity. And in some cases, it's even more than two and a half times the employee's salary. In fact, 42 percent of the survey respondents said it costs at least three times the employee's salary to replace an employee who doesn't work out.

More than money is at stake, however. Sixty-eight percent of the survey respondents said bad hiring decisions hurt overall employee morale, and 66 percent said bad hiring choices decrease overall employee productivity.

"There is a small margin for error today in hiring and promoting people into key positions," says Rick Smith, a senior vice president at Right Management.

Source: Right Management Consultants news release, April 11, 2006.

Knoxville Ranks As "Most Affordable" City for New Grads

Taking into account both salaries and the cost of living, the most affordable city in America for new college graduates just entering the workforce is Knoxville, Tennessee, according to a recent report by ERI Economic Research Institute.

Bridgeport, Connecticut comes in a close second while Kokomo, Indiana comes in third; Reading, Pennsylvania fourth; and Florence, Alabama fifth.

The five lowest-ranked cities on the list of 261: Los Angeles; Honolulu, Hawaii; Washington, D.C.; San Francisco; and New York City.

A caveat: The study considered local entry-level salaries for only five fields: accounting, law, teaching, sales, and engineering.

Source: ERI Economic Research Institute news release, July 6, 2006.

Firefighters, Doctors Seen as Having Most Prestigious Careers

It's no secret that parents and other adults often have a profound impact on college students' career decisions—especially when it comes to determining which career paths are "prestigious" and which ones aren't.

That's why the results of a recent Harris Interactive poll of 1,020 American adults are so intriguing.

Participants were read a list of 23 occupations and asked to rate each on its level of prestige. The top five jobs with "very great prestige": firefighter (cited by 63 percent of respondents), doctor (58 percent), nurse (55 percent), scientist (54 percent), and teacher (52 percent).

The five occupations at the bottom of the list: union leader (with only 12 percent of respondents saying the job has "very great prestige"), actor (12 percent), business executive (11 percent), stockbroker (11 percent), and real estate agent/broker (6 percent).

Source: *The Harris Poll*, July 26, 2006; *Career Journal.com*, July 27, 2006.

PETE'S COLUMN

What's "Old" Is New Again ... and Again



By Peter Vogt

Sometimes, when I'm tired and crabby and frustrated (not that that ever happens), I conclude that the college students and recent graduates I work with—in person and online via MonsterTRAK's "Career Planning for College Students" message board—just aren't listening.

There are days when it seems like I just won't be able to bring myself to repeat the same resume advice I gave yesterday ... or the same informational interviewing tips I offered last week ... or the

same how-to-choose-a-major spiel I delivered last month.

When I'm in one of these moods, I have to slap myself (figuratively speaking!) to come down off my high horse, and remind myself of two critical facts:

1) I was once walking in (and still am, in some ways) the very same shoes these students/grads are walking in now—and my questions were no less confusing and urgent to me back then.

2) **Much** more importantly, I'm not really repeating myself—nor are any of us who work in the career services

arena—because my "audience" changes from day to day, week to week, month to month, and, especially, year to year.

It's a good time of year for all of us to remind ourselves of something so obvious that it can easily escape our attention on occasion (especially when we're tired, crabby, and frustrated!): The career advice that seems "old" to us is really new to most of the people who hear it.

And that "recycling" process will only continue as we meet new students with "new" questions and concerns.

Campus CAREER COUNSELOR

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