

LIFE AFTER GUILFORD: "Seven Up" guide for all aspects of success outside the Guilford bubble

By Haejin Song
STAFF WRITER

As graduation nears, it's the perfect time to ask, "What's next?" Going to graduate school or finding a job or internship may be stressful and confusing, so here are seven tips to get on the right track.

DRESS UP:

We've all heard the idiom "don't judge a book by its cover." Yet in the working environment, this is not always the case. Dressing for success plays a critical role in leaving an important first impression on individuals you meet while doing your job or an interview. Think about what to wear, and keep in mind that wearing a collared shirt instead of a t-shirt can help you make it or break it.

"It's not just dress up, it's dress appropriate," said Bree Shepard '11. She advises having a standard outfit for formal interviews, but being flexible for other job-related events.

"(For example) my first interview with Apple was a hiring event, so I decided to wear a casual dress instead," said Shepard. "Then, when I got called back for a second interview, I knew that the managers and workers there were a bit more laid-back on the dress code, so the dress suit would have been overkill. Choosing a skirt and blouse ensemble worked better for that situation."

SHUT UP:

Two ears. One mouth. It is always important to listen more and talk less wherever you go. When it comes to interviews, it's a chance for you to introduce yourself, talk about your interests and mention your accomplishments. When you catch yourself rambling or flaunting your achievements, it's time to be quiet.

"It's okay to talk about your accomplishments," said Shepard. "The important thing is to answer only the questions they ask. You have absolutely no idea what kind of person they are looking for in the role. You can kill your chances by trying to be who you think they want. Be yourself."

CHEER UP:

Freedom is calling your name. After four years of hard work and a sprinkle of all-nighters, take a deep breath and relax. It is up to you to go to graduate school, take a break or hunt down a job. However, whatever you choose to do, follow your heart – no matter how cliché that sounds. Do something that makes you happy.

"Studies show that humans are increasingly more efficient when working at something they enjoy and deem valuable," said first-year Julia Draper. "Why work at something you're not passionate about or that doesn't make you happy?"

Career Coordinator and Advisor Teresa Fitzgerald pointed out that right out of college, you may not be able to find your ideal job. You can, however, take steps to ensure that you know what you are getting into.

"Happiness is very important when choosing a job or going to graduate school," said Fitzgerald in an email interview. "Get familiar with where you intend to go. Research the school or company. Study the mission statement of your destination and as much as you can about what they do on a day to day basis. Go visit or set up an Informational Interview."

While searching for the job or graduate school that is right for you, remember to search inside yourself to ensure that you are ready for the change.

"Ask yourself questions like, 'Does this fit my values? What is the social culture like here? Can I see myself in that environment?'" said Fitzgerald.

BACK-UP:

Get a job in _____. Work for _____. Earn _____.

Sometimes, life doesn't always go as planned. When your Plan A fails, it's always assuring to have a backup plan.

"After Guilford, I plan to pursue a doctor of physical therapy or master of occupational therapy degree," said sophomore Meredith Foscue. "It's always valuable to have a backup plan because you cannot be certain life will turn out as you expect. Every student should prepare themselves for many different circumstances in order to provide themselves with the best opportunities."

CLEAN UP:

Organization is one of the key characteristics any worker, job seeker, and graduate student should have. Keeping up with your organizational skills shouldn't stop at the end of the road of Guilford. Don't forget to keep a calendar and agenda to remind you of important appointments. In addition, during your job or internship search, make sure to keep your résumé and job application in a folder or binder at all times. You never know when it may just come in handy!

GROW UP:

Stepping out of the Guilford bubble and into the "real world" can be exhilarating, but it comes with baggage — growing up. It requires self-sacrifice, responsibility, and maturity to achieve your goals post-Guilford.

DON'T GIVE UP:

Life is a bumpy road, and chances are you may fall and trip along the way after college.

"To secure employment, (you) will need to be both aggressive and patient," said Fitzgerald in an email interview. "Employment will not come to (you); (you) must get out of (your) comfort zone and be prepared to go to the source."

Finding a job or obtaining that law degree may take more stamina and perseverance than you expect. However, no matter how difficult it gets, you should never give up, because there is no shortcut to success.

Features Editor Meg Holden contributed to this article

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