

'Vacation' hurts opportunities

From staff reports

For a college senior facing graduation and the important career decisions that accompany it, taking some time off can be an attractive prospect.

After spending 17 years in school, a graduate may think that he or she deserves a chance to travel or just "hang out" for a while before the responsibilities of a job start rolling in. What the graduate may not realize is that taking time off after graduation may be hazardous to his career.

According to Sharon Wiatt, associate director of the University Career Planning and Placement Services (UCPPS), students who postpone finding a job often face lowered job opportunities.

"They don't realize they're hurting themselves."

A post-graduation job search can be hampered because employers frequently gear hiring and training around the school year, Wiatt said. Recruiters visit college campuses during students' senior year. Training programs then start in May or June, immediately after graduation.

"Even students who just take the summer off are out of luck when they show up in September or October, and they're already four months behind," she said.

An employer's attitude toward someone who starts looking for work at some point after graduation can become another obstacle. Wiatt, who once worked as a recruiter in the oil industry, cited four

conclusions that employers tend to draw about such people.

An employer might view the applicant as less mature and less ready to assume the responsibility of a full-time job.

"The employer would be thinking: 'Why did you wait? What were you doing your entire senior year?' My number one priority would have been looking for a job," Wiatt said.

The employer might see the person's delayed job search as a lack of motivation and willingness to work. Tom Brinkley, manager of recruiting and college relations for R.J. Reynolds Industries, said that on a recruiting trip to Athens, Ga., last year he talked to a UNC alumnus who had graduated in May and was looking for a job.

"I asked him what he had been doing since May. He said, 'I sort of messed around.' I wrote him off immediately as having no motivation," Brinkley said.

A third prejudice an employer may have against people who have taken time off is that they are "leftovers," Wiatt said. That is, it may be assumed the person has been looking for a job all along but has been unsuccessful.

Donald Carson, senior vice president and division executive of international banking at First Wachovia Corporation, said his initial reaction on meeting an applicant who graduated a year earlier was, "Why hasn't this person found a job yet?"

"That's not a fair conclusion. But it's a cynicism that companies have."

Finally, an employer may be suspicious of a person who has taken time off, Wiatt said. The person who shows up looking for a job in October creates an inconvenience for the employer, who was interviewing on campus during the person's senior year.

"The employer is going to wonder, 'Why this sudden interest now, when I was on his doorstep a year ago?'" she said.

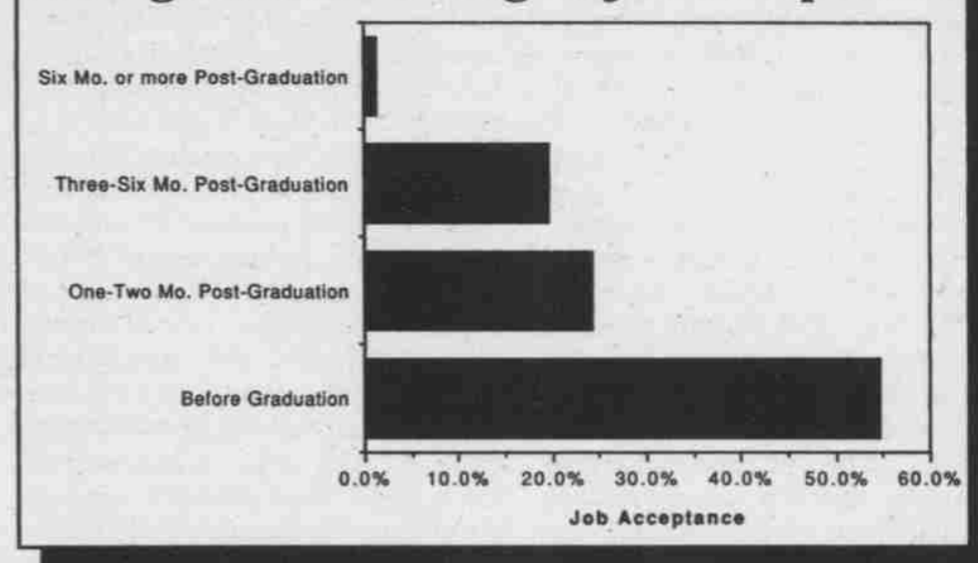
According to Wiatt, 244 employers recruited on the UNC campus in 1988. Recruiters represented a wide range of fields, including banks, chemical and oil companies, communications firms, consulting firms, certified public accountants, government agencies, health and pharmaceutical agencies, non-profit organizations, research agencies, retailers and publishers.

With such opportunities for seniors to interview on campus and line up jobs before graduation, a student who takes time off has the extra burden of conducting his job search on his own, Wiatt said. Unfortunately, such individuality can be negative in an employer's eyes.

"Employers like people who are not different," Carson said.

The reason for taking time off can make a difference, however. Time spent in the Peace Corps or the armed forces can certainly add to a resume. Or students may want to take the time to travel or to do something they have always wanted to do. According to Brinkley, the person who can

1988 graduate timing of job acceptance



give a good, convincing reason for deviating from the normal route can make a good impression.

"The question is why they take time off," Brinkley said.

"I was burned out" is not a satisfactory answer. But if you show that you did something career-building, it could be turned around to be a very positive response."

Carson also said a good reason for the time off could be "a big plus." He cited an example of a business major wanting to study music before starting a career in business. Wiatt, however, warned against underestimating the value of travel experience to an employer. On a UCPPS survey where employers were asked to rank 14 items according to importance on a resume, travel ranked last.

"I find that students think travel is

personally meaningful but even that can turn off employers."

A number of interviewers can be family-oriented adults who have never traveled out of the state and who have had to work since the first day out of school.

"They may resent the image of a student as being a playboy with no responsibilities or think, 'This kid is rich and doesn't know how to work for a living,'" she said.

When it comes to post-graduation planning, careful consideration should be taken, Wiatt said. A person can make starting a career very difficult for himself by taking time off. But with a good reason and a convincing argument, a person may be able to step off the beaten path without damaging his chances for finding a job.

More employers seek liberal arts majors

By STACI COX

Assistant Managing Editor

Although many companies conducting interviews on campus ask for applicants with specific degrees, most request interviews with students of any major, creating an opportunity UNC liberal arts majors tend to miss.

"Students tend to stereotype the University placement service as just for business or science majors, when it most definitely is not," said Sharon Wiatt, associate director of the University Career Planning and Placement Services (UCPPS). "A lot of employers are seeking liberal arts majors who never show up."

The University has lost employers interest in the past because they did not have a full schedule of interviews, she said.

"Not only do liberal arts majors miss out on excellent opportunities for interesting careers, they limit the

opportunities for future classes. It's really an unfortunate cycle."

According to a UCPPS survey of 1988 graduates, liberal arts majors have landed positions varying from account executives, program coordinators and legal assistants to paste-up artists and technical writers.

"Students have a tendency to limit their job possibilities by their degree when there's a whole range of careers available," Wiatt said.

Recruiter requests by curriculum at UNC favor applicants with any major; there were 170 such requests last year. Especially promising for liberal arts majors are sales positions and government jobs, she said.

"Students need to find out what's available to them and take advantage of it. But, as always, it is important to find out what the company does and what the position requires before going into a job interview. Graduates

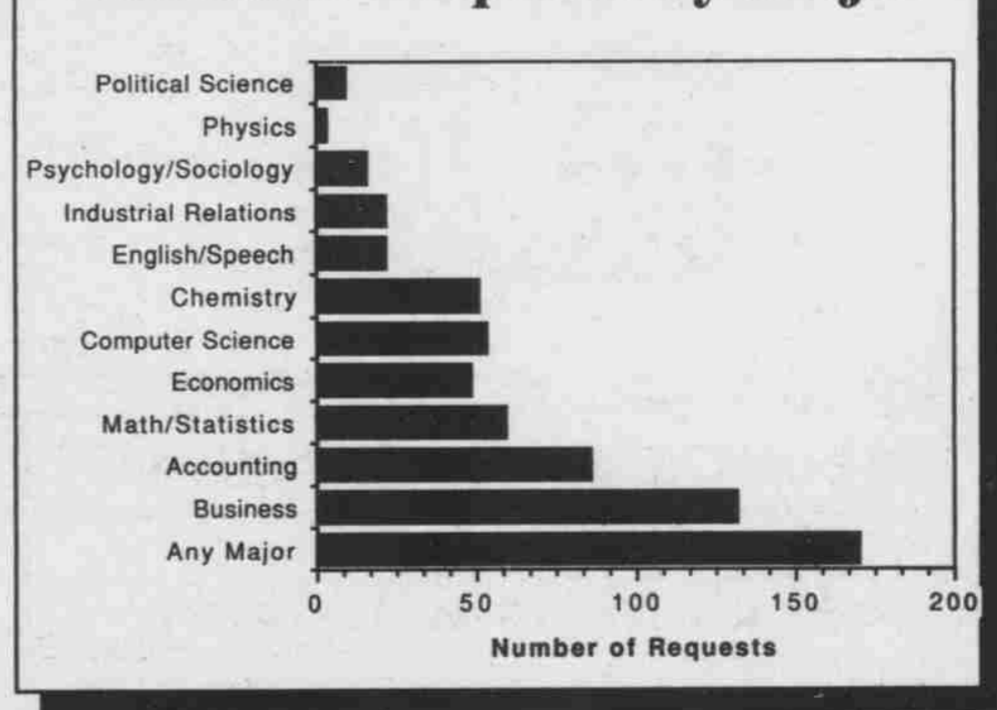
in any field can make a poor impression without first examining what they're interviewing for."

Sophomores and juniors should also be aware of internship positions offered to liberal arts majors by employers seeking to cultivate future job applicants, she said.

"It can mean a great deal to have internship experience. And there's nothing wrong with approaching an employer and trying to convince him to open up an internship position. I had a girl create her own internship position because she was so assertive."

Employers seeking summer interns include: BB&T, the CIA, Macy's South, J.P. Morgan & Co., Proctor & Gamble and U.S. General Accounting. Most employers seeking interns want students of any major with an illustrated interest in internship-type employment.

Recruiter Requests by Major



from page 6

Resume

The closure of a resume should always be "References available upon request," Harris said.

Often students overlook obvious factors, such as name, school address, home address and social security number, she said. This is crucial information and should appear first.

When describing work experience, be honest and maximize all duties and responsibilities, Harris said.

"Student should use active verbs — like organized, planned and developed — and short phrases."

Harris said all resumes should include several stylistic features: resumes should be written in typed, outline form; they should not have any personal pronouns; they should not, especially for new graduates, exceed one page, and should always be 100 percent error-free, Harris said.

"Typos and spelling mistakes are inexcusable," Harris said. Students should have someone proofread their resume because writers can easily overlook their own errors.

It is also important that resumes are attractive and legible with wide margins.

The format for students applying for internships is basically the same, but underclassmen should include

high school experiences and accolades, as well, Harris said.

Lee Meyer, associate dean of the College of Arts and Science, said the hardest part about compiling a resume was the career statement. Students should include their career interests, knowledge in the field, past experience in the field and the aspect that attracts them to that field.

Students should not include a tran-

script, he said.

It is best to make physical contact with employers when distributing resumes to prospective employers, Meyer said. "Students should always be assertive, polite and respectful."

Students who want a counselor to critique and proofread their resumes can receive that service from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday at UCPPS.