

Many Colleges Graduates Entering Technical Schools Bachelors Degree not enough

by Cheryl Jacobs

MADISON, WI (CPS) - After ten years of college, Cheri McKently is getting a little depressed.

Even after she gets her masters degree in industrial social work next fall from the University of Wisconsin, she doesn't think she has much of a chance to land a decent job.

"I don't have any hope of getting that \$25,000 a year job," says the 38-year-old mother of two, who holds down a part-time job at the university's Continuing Education Service.

In her job, she gets to see increasing numbers of people in situations like hers: recent college grads who, after periods of trying but failing to parlay their degrees into the jobs they were trained for, are now lowering their sights and expectations.

It is happening at similar continuing education and retraining offices around the country, too.

"The people coming in for counseling are in their twenties and thirties, and they feel angry, frustrated and betrayed," says Kent Lesandrini, a UW career counselor.

Especially among recent grads, "I think there is disenchantment, and expectations are not met," adds Judith Gumbener, San Diego State University's associate planning director.

"More people are being educated, thinking this is going to open the doors," says Dr. William Bryan of the University of Alabama's Continuing Education Program. "But it is not."

Students and recent grads "have seen a pretty hard decade for employment," summarizes Paul Barton, head of the National Institute for Work and Learning in Washington, D.C. "These people don't see themselves doing as well as their parents, and that is part of the disappointment."

"There is a feeling that people are not in control of their future," Lesandrini explains.

He sees post-graduate depression most often among liberal arts degree holders like teachers and social workers, but also among a surprising number of people who have earned their masters of business administration (MBA). MBAs, of course, were considered the golden job ticket of the late seventies.

Part of the reason for the widespread disappointment and the increasing traffic at continuing education programs from recent grads is that students treat their educations too much as employment tools, the counselors say.

"People rely too much on education as a singular qualification for employment," Gumbener contends. "The total being and image put forth are more important."

But the unrealistic job expectations aren't the educators' fault, the educators say.

"I don't think anyone ever promises anyone a position," says Dr. William Barton of the University of Tennessee's continuing education program and vice president of the nationwide Association for Continuing Higher Education.

San Diego State's Gumbener also attributes the palpable "disillusionment" among the recent grads she sees to the current recession.

Her clients "are tremendously frustrated because the job opportunities are not the same as they were three years ago."

Alabama's Bryan says bringing down the state's 16 percent unemployment rate would go a long way toward improving people's moods.

But Williard Wirtz of the National Institute for Work and Learning says much of the underemployment and depression among recent grads can be traced to a fundamental shift in the American economy, not just to a temporary recession.

"This has always happened" when economic activity moves from one base (say, agriculture) to another (industry), he points out. "The disillusionment is nothing new."

"The computer, the chips and robots are coming in," he says. "Those with degrees from a couple of years ago are finding it difficult to compete in the higher technology of the eighties."

Whatever the reasons for the disillusionment, they are prompting a remarkable enrollment boom at the continuing education offices and especially technical schools around the nation.

"We are experiencing an inordinate number of degreed students coming back," exults Robert L. Brown, admissions director for Wake Technical College in Raleigh, N.C.

Wake's enrollment is up 42 percent over fall, 1981.

"I turned away 1000 students last fall," he reports. "I'm afraid I'm going to be turning away 2200 this year." Many of them have Ph.D.s and MBAs, he adds.

"We have a lot of students with four-year degrees coming back" for retraining at Central Texas College, says Lillian Young of the Killeen school's Skills Training Center.

They tell her, "I've gone from one place to another, and I can't find a job," she says. Many of the college grads are now in CTC's auto mechanic, medical technician, welding, diesel mechanic and building

maintenance programs.

Technical school enrollment nationwide has gone up 20 percent over the last two years, in part because of the influx of college grads, reports Christopher Davis of the National Association for Trade and Technical Schools.

He says most of them are enrolling in data processing, electronics, dental technician and drafting technician programs.

The programs "make them more marketable for entry-level jobs," he explains.

But unreconstituted liberal arts majors like McKently see a determinedly-downbeat future.

"I'm facing a job market that doesn't want social workers," she says. After starting business school, she married and had children before returning to college for her B.A. in social work. Her one social work job fell victim to a budget cut. After a divorce, she returned to Wisconsin for her masters.

Even with the advanced degree, she fears she won't be able to get a good job, or hold onto one if the economy goes sour again. "I do still hope I can get something, but I will always be underemployable."

Business in North Carolina On Rise

The level of business activity in North Carolina continued to expand in March, according to the Wachovia Business Index. The Index registered 117.9, up 1.1 percent from the revised February level.

The rise in the Index resulted from an increase in new business starts and a decline in initial claims for unemployment insurance. The gains were tempered by losses in building permits and non-agricultural employment during March.


Non-agricultural employment was slightly below the February level, with both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors reporting lower employment levels. Employment was down in the apparel, construction and government sectors, but was up in textiles, furniture, trade and service. The average manufacturing workweek was 38.9 hours, an increase of 1.0 percent from February.

Photo-journalist

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He says that the small number of blacks who are working photo-journalists is due to economic factors. "We're slow in photo journalism because of the expenses involved," he says. "A camera costs you a lot of money, but it's an investment. He also says that it's not wise to get a cheap camera because it will tear up quickly.

"Taking pictures has to be something that makes you shake on the inside if you want to be a photo journalist or professional photographer," says J.P. You have to be a freak over it and be able to visualize a picture before you take it. He says that aspiring photo journalists should first of all go out and buy an inexpensive to mid-range priced 35 millimeter camera. Reserve some money so you can enroll in a Beginning 35 millimeter photography class. And by all means go out and start shooting pictures if you have a camera."



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