

# CAREER JOURNAL

Published by the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education  
A Unit of the Office for Undergraduate Studies

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Dear Students,

As a career counselor and publisher of the Career Journal, I often write articles about the job market, opportunities here at Western, services we offer, or job-searching tips. To stay current, I read articles in both the popular news and professional journals. I talk with employers at career fairs and receive calls from alumni who are looking for jobs or seeking to hire our new graduates. I work hard to spot new trends in a dynamic, rapidly changing employment environment. In no particular order, here is a collection of my recent observations and thoughts, including both some emerging realities and timeless advice.

**There's no longer a "gold standard" way to search for jobs.** Consider all the options: It's cliché to imagine just circling ads in the newspaper; networking has always been critical in meeting or being introduced to possible employers; cold calling takes a lot of work but can pay off; interning gets your foot in the door; employers at college career fairs are there specifically to recruit; using online resources like JobCat is an easy way to cast a wide net; and, many large employers exclusively use their websites to post jobs and accept applications. The trouble is, all of these methods may work, but one may not be enough. Job searchers need to (a) learn about the culture of their chosen career and use the methods most likely to help them succeed, (b) formulate a plan that probably includes more than one of these strategies, and (c) follow through with tenacity, determination, and a positive attitude.

**Technology both offers opportunities and creates liabilities, but it's the new reality.** At first, job search engines were all the rage, until people realized that uploading a résumé and waiting doesn't usually work. Depending on how they are used, Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn can promote, or destroy, a professional

## Photo Essay: Making a Difference

Dr. Carol Burton, our Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies, describes our Quality Enhancement Plan as an initiative that showcases "our commitment to enhancing the educational experiences of our undergraduate students.<sup>1</sup>" Starting with this issue, The Career Journal will include a regular feature celebrating people at Western who are demonstrating that commitment by "making a difference."

<sup>1</sup>Source: "Diamond in the Making: A Quality Enhancement Plan Designed to Shine," The Career Journal, September 2007, Vol. 5 Issue. 1

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# CAREER SERVICES PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS

## Students and Alumni: Take advantage of the many services we offer!

### JobCat, MonsterTRAK, and Localjobs.com

Internet-based recruiting systems on our website that include jobs as well as opportunities to post a résumé and sign up for interviews.

### Career Counseling

If you have a career concern that you would like to discuss, call for an appointment with a career counselor.

### Career Testing

If you are having difficulty making a decision about a major or a career, we offer career testing and interpretation.

### Cooperative Education

Co-op is a program that allows you to work in your career or major field and receive directly related experience and credit WHILE you are still in school.

### Résumé Critiquing Service

Email your résumé (cover letter, too!) to [mdespeaux@email.wcu.edu](mailto:mdespeaux@email.wcu.edu) or [mashe@email.wcu.edu](mailto:mashe@email.wcu.edu) and make an appointment to discuss it!

## Career Services INFORMATION

828-227-7133 | <http://careers.wcu.edu>

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*The CAREER JOURNAL is a publication of the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education at Western Carolina University.*

*Publisher: Michael Despeaux  
Editor: Brandy Kiger*

### Student Employment

Need some cash? The [student employment office](#) can help you find a part-time job. We offer listings for on-campus as well as off-campus employment. Visit them at <http://careers.wcu.edu>.

### Career Services Website

Our website offers links, articles, event calendars, job search tools, directories, videos and DISCOVER, a computer-aided guidance program to help you in your career decision. Available at <http://careers.wcu.edu>.

### Interviewing Skills Assistance

You can participate in a mock interview and improve your skills through our online [Perfect Interview program](#).

### Career Days and Recruitment Events

Career Services offers 18-20 [recruitment events](#) every year, including the Career and Graduate School Expo, the Allied Health and Nurses' Career Day, Spring Job Fest, Summer Job Fair, Engineering, Math, and CS Fair, Construction Management Fair, Education Recruitment Day and multiple etiquette-development events.

Find us on  
**Facebook**

Facebook is a registered trademark of Facebook, Inc.

WCU Career Services has a Facebook page!

Become a fan, and we can send you updates on Career Services and Co-op Event happenings.

Find us online by searching keywords: "WCU Career Services" on Facebook.

Want to get on the career path?

## Use JobCat.

1. Log in to JobCat at [careers.wcu.edu](http://careers.wcu.edu)
2. Complete a personal profile
3. Upload a résumé
4. Submit your online application by the deadline.

JobCat is updated with new jobs almost every day, so check for updates regularly!

image. Printing a résumé on bonded paper to impress the recipient may no longer be an option when they want to receive it as an electronic attachment. Everybody has a cell phone and an email address, but not necessarily the most mature ringtone or nickname. Should you text message your friends while waiting for an interview? On what university's career services website can you use technology to search for jobs, learn to interview and then practice doing it, see résumé samples, take career tests, read helpful articles, research salary information, and learn what you can do with any major? Here's a hint – look for links in this newsletter. My advice to job seekers is to learn to use all technology in the most thoughtful way possible to gain important knowledge and create a responsible, courteous, professional image.

**Students need to get going early.** In today's employment environment, it's more important than ever to offer experience in the form of internships, co-ops, service-learning work, leadership and co-curricular roles, and anything else that (a) relates to the job or (b) showcases transferrable skills. In order

to gain these experiences, students need to set goals and begin working toward them as early as their first year in college. This is not to say that students should carelessly choose their majors or career interests – we can help you identify your values, interests, and abilities and make informed choices. And, experiential learning opportunities may provide exposure that better educates you regarding a particular profession, validating your decisions or possibly steering you toward a different option.

**Communication skills are central to students' success.** A strong sense of purpose, great experience, and excellent job skills all count for nothing if you can't sell them in your application and interview. On the job, you'll need to cultivate relationships, write reports, and make presentations. College isn't just about learning things; it's also about effectively communicating what you know in multiple ways and contexts. Students will increase their chances of success later on if they identify weak areas in their communication skills and make practice and improvement a career goal.

**Some students still don't take advantage of easy resources.** Despite advertising via banners and fliers on campus, website ads, newsletter articles, class announcements, and other initiatives, some students fail to attend our career fairs. Take a look at our on-line lists of employers, and you'll see that we have many highly-regarded companies who send representatives to Western expressly to recruit our students. Students who attend our fairs make connections and find employment. Also, we're happy to help students and alumni build and fine-tune their résumés and prepare for job interviews. Seek our help – it makes our day!

Each of these topics merits a full article or even more extensive discussion. I intend for these thoughts to serve merely as the catalyst for the adoption of new goals or habits, a conversation with your advisor or a faculty member in your field, or a visit to career services for our assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Michael Despeaux

## Top 4 Tips for Recent Graduates Looking for a Job in 2009

by Melissa Bullard

If you're a recent college graduate, the current economic situation and news about rising unemployment may have you concerned about getting a job, particularly if you've already searched and come up short. Don't panic. There are a few tactics that can make your resume stand out, improve your chances of getting one of those fantastic entry-level jobs, and give you something worthwhile to do with your time.

### *1. Keep a Positive Attitude*

According to the Wall Street Journal, the unemployment rate in April among those with only high school diplomas was about three times that of college graduates the same age. Even if job opportunities aren't abounding at the moment, you've still got an edge over those without a degree. Many companies are still hiring; it's just a matter of matching your particular skills to those most needed

by employers. Eventually, waiting longer means you may appreciate the job you get even more.

### *2. Consider Rewiring Your Résumé or Curriculum Vitae (CV)*

Think outside the box: just because you graduated with a degree in math doesn't mean you have to teach math or work in finance. People have used elementary education degrees as a step toward



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# Making a Difference

Photos and Essay by Brandy Kiger

Across campus, there are people working every day to make sure students at Western Carolina University have every opportunity possible to succeed, both academically and in the job market. Here, we highlight just a few of those faculty and staff who make a difference in students' career development.

## Dr. Glenn Bowen



Dr. Glenn Bowen, Director of Service Learning, provides opportunities for students to augment their academic education by serving in the community.

Dr. Bowen “encourages students to grasp opportunities to develop both self-awareness and self-efficacy through their participation in service learning. As students immerse themselves in community-based work, they can clarify their values and gain valuable insights into their personal strengths and weaknesses... Students are expected to develop such professional skills as teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and leadership, which are essential to successful careers.”



A staff member lends a hand in the Campus Kitchen garden.

A WCU alumna is seen here working in the Campus Kitchen Garden. The garden is a service-learning project that helps to meet the nutritional needs of the local community.

NEXT PHOTO

# Michael Despeaux and Mardy Ashe



Mardy Ashe meets with students at Western's summer Orientation fair.



Michael Despeaux discusses majors with an incoming first-year student.

Mardy Ashe, Director of Career Services, and Michael Despeaux, Career Services Coordinator and Career Counselor, work with students at Western to help prepare them for careers and life after college.

"We try so hard to get on the radar screen early on. Career development starts during the first year, when students choose majors, get involved on campus, and seek motivation to study and excel. Career goals can help students make great choices. We aspire to assist in both the goal-setting process and in the development of a four-year action plan to achieve success." Mike says, "Of course, when it comes to résumés and interviews, we love helping students describe and articulate their leadership experience, co-ops, related service and college knowledge to win the right job when they graduate."

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## Dr. Betty Farmer



Dr. Betty Farmer, Professor in the Communications Department at WCU, strives to prepare her students as fully as possible for the job market.

“I try to make students aware of all of the resources that are available to them, ranging from on-campus offices like Career Services to online articles to national professional organizations... I stress to the students that they can’t wait until their senior year to start doing these things [building résumés and portfolios] if they want to be successful.

Students are taking advantage of the professional media outlets on campus, seeking and acquiring multiple internships, and assuming leadership roles. I help students see possibilities and make connections. I strongly encourage mentoring and networking. I’m constantly trying to match students with employers or campus projects. It’s particularly gratifying when alums contact me and tell me that something I did helped them get a job. I also love it when grads have an internship or employment lead to pass on. It keeps me going!”

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## Joanne Foster

Joanne Foster is the Work-Study Coordinator for Financial Aid. Each semester, she helps students find jobs on campus where they can utilize their Federal Work-Study funds. Work-study jobs are a great way for students to begin building their résumés and are “a catalyst to begin growth while they are working to achieve [academic success] at college. [These] jobs provide a professional environment for students to earn money while working toward academic goals,” Joanne says. “It gives [students] an opportunity to work toward their career development and promotes professionalism, while building their résumés.”



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## Dr. Fred Hinson



As Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, part of Dr. Fred Hinson's job is to educate students to all the services that are available to them on campus and then work with them to utilize those services. "Too many students are passive and don't get assertive enough to find out or use the resources on campus... We try to make sure we give out information to students so that they know what's in this building [One Stop], so when they do have a problem they can come back and see us. One of the things that I think is key to retention here at Western is providing good student support services... to help students be successful."

To really succeed in their career development, "students should start utilizing Career Services from the word 'go.' [They should] take interest tests and skill tests and sit down with a Career Counselor and have a discussion about what they might need to start taking to see if they are really interested in a particular field. A lot of students would save a lot of time by doing that their first semester, and then taking that and building a resume each semester."

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## Lynn Mathis

Lynn Mathis, the Coordinator for Resident Student Success, has a real interest in helping her students to succeed. Working with first-year students, she heads up Western PEAKS, a program designed to instill confidence and leadership skills through classroom experiences. “We know that students need assistance with transition from high school into college, and we want all of our students to develop leadership skills... We want them to have the skills so that when they have to step up to the plate, they can do it comfortably.”

Establishing sub-programs within Western PEAKS such as Career Exploration, EcoPEAKS, Band of Brothers, Best of Friends and Cats in Action, Lynn is helping to ensure student success from the very start. “I think the most important thing to students’ career development is for them to know who they are and what they like to do.”



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## Dr. Irene Mueller and Dr. Mary Teslow



Dr. Mary Teslow and Dr. Irene Mueller, assistant professors in the HIA department, “focus on helping HIA students make connections between the professional content and expectations and their personal strengths and preferences. [They] provide many opportunities for the HIA students to explore – explore themselves, explore the Health Information Management profession, and explore their career options following graduation.”

“We strive to help students develop self-awareness and self-motivation by setting higher standards for responsibility each semester (helping students “step-up” to a higher performance level each semester), with the goal of their becoming confident, entry-level professionals by graduation. We consistently role-model professional attitudes and behaviors with our students during classes, in individual performance evaluations every semester, and by participating with our students in many experiential learning activities.”

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## Dr. Brad Sims



Dr. Brad Sims, Department Head of Construction Management in the Kimmel School of Construction Management and Technology\*, pushes his students to succeed by including real projects in his curriculum, and requiring mandatory internships for program completion. “We work closely with employers in our program,” he says, “and we help our students with job placement. We have a really close relationship with [employers in our] industry.”

Western’s Construction Management program is a “high quality program where... employers come back because they like the abilities of students we graduate. We use “real-world” projects in the classroom and require internships so that the students can gain a lot of knowledge in the field,” Sims says. “I’ve been able to take what I’ve learned by working in construction management and other industries and apply it from the ground up at Western. We’ve developed a curriculum that provides students the information they need [to succeed] in the marketplace.”

\*Editor’s Note: At the time of this printing, Dr. Brad Sims has accepted a position at another university, and will no longer be serving as department head for Construction Management, but his and his colleagues’ career-focused program and support continues to make a difference at WCU.

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## Steve Wilson

Steve Wilson, Student Employment Specialist in the Career Services and Cooperative Education office, is responsible for the processing of student hires on campus.

When asked how non-work study positions on campus benefit students in the long run, Steve says, "Often student jobs on campus are viewed as just a way for a student to make a little extra cash. While this may be true, these positions may be the first formal work experience a person has held. A student may want a job but find a formal interview a daunting experience. The departments on campus are easy-going and become a great place for students to try out their interview and job skills. Once hired, a student then begins building their résumé.

Future employers often look back to college jobs to see what type of skills and abilities a person may possess. Also, an employer is looking for a consistent work history. Has this person showed up to work on a regular basis for years at a time? All of these aspects are some of the benefits of securing and continuing an on-campus job."



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## Jill Woodruff



Jill Norton Woodruff, Special Events Coordinator in the Career Services and Cooperative Education office, plans and organizes career events throughout the school year to give WCU students an edge in their job search. By bringing employers to campus, and encouraging students to network with those employers, Jill helps facilitate pathways for employment for WCU students, both in internships and jobs after graduation.

Career Services is hosting 22 career events during the 2009-2010 academic year. "We have added some new events, changed some old events... we try to fashion our events with what's going on in the world and with the economy. This is a tough economic time and we are here to help the students. Getting a job isn't as easy as [students] think; the help Career Services offers with résumé writing, networking, interviewing, etc. are helpful in making [them] stand out as job candidates.

Utilizing all the services the campus, especially those Career Services has to offer [is important to students' career development]. Networking, volunteering and participating in campus events is invaluable," she continues. "Career fairs offer students an on-campus opportunity to see what jobs are available and to network with potential employers."



Students meet with an employer at a job fair in the UC Grand Room.

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## TOP TIPS

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social work. What sub-skills, extra training, and uncommon volunteer experience do you have? You may have the necessary skills to get your dream job, but no employer knows that unless you pull them out from hiding under your degree and job titles and make them explicit in your résumé. What happened when you helped out at the food bank? Did the administration go wireless? Did efficiency increase? Were you key in recruitment of new volunteers? Now may be a good time to revise your résumé or CV, highlighting volunteer experience and remembering to focus not just on tasks, but also on results.

### 3. Prepare Yourself As Best As Possible

Take advantage of tools and advice that can help you in your job search. Many career fairs offer networking opportunities, and some offer free résumé consultation. If the school where you graduated offers career counseling or mock interviews, take advantage of these resources to hone your interviewing skills and find new fields that match your coursework. College preparation Websites such as [CollegeGrad.com](http://CollegeGrad.com) can give you résumé, interviewing, and job search tips.

In the meantime, see what is missing from your education or experience. Some jobs require a particular skill or knowledge set that you might not have. If you are unable to find employment, take advantage of the extra time to take classes, earn a particular certification, or even go to graduate school. If you think you may eventually need a master's degree to get ahead in your career and you're having trouble finding a job now, why not consider starting the master's degree now, or at least taking some graduate courses?

### 4. Keep Looking

Don't give up the search. [CollegeGrad.com](http://CollegeGrad.com)

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## Fall 2009 Calendar of Events

### September

- 29th** [Etiquette Dinner\\*](#)  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm, UC Grandroom  
*This event is intended to teach students the rules of proper dining and conversation in a formal setting. Attire is business casual. Tickets can be purchased at Career Services in 205 Killian Annex. \$*

### October

- 7th** [Construction Management Career Fair\\*](#)  
9:00 am – 5:00 pm, UC Grandroom
- 14th & 15th** [Teaching Opportunities for Non-Teaching Majors](#)  
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm, UC Catamount Room
- 20th** [Education Recruitment Day\\*](#)  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

- 27th** [Graduate and Professional School Days](#)  
— **29th** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, UC Atrium

- 27th** [Engineering, Computer Science, and Mathematics Fair](#)  
9:00 am – 5:00 pm, UC Grandroom

[Computer Science and Mathematics Panel Discussion](#)  
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm, UC Theater

- 28th** [The Big, Broad Career Expo](#)  
11:00 am - 2:00 p.m., UC Grandroom

[Green Jobs Panel Discussion](#)  
5:00 pm - 6:30 p.m., UC Theater

- 29th** [Criminal Justice Career Fair\\*](#)  
1:00 pm- 4:00 p.m., UC Grandroom

### November

- 5th** [Allied Health & Nurses Career Day\\*](#)  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm, UC Grandroom

### *\*For all Expos and Career Days*

Business casual to professional attire is required. Students and alumni are encouraged to bring several copies of your latest résumé. We also suggest uploading a résumé into JobCat. If you need assistance with developing a resume, please visit Career Services (205 Killian Annex) or schedule an appointment with a career counselor 828.227.7133.

Lists of attending organizations and details about career events will be available at <http://careers.wcu.edu> and on JobCat. Lists will be updated as registrations are received.

\$ = There will be a fee for this event; cash, check, CatCard/student meal plan accepted

# Spring 2010 Calendar of Events

## February

- 2nd** **Etiquette Dinner\***  
6:00 pm – 8pm, UC Grandroom  
*This event is intended to teach students the rules of proper dining and conversation in a formal setting. Attire is business casual. Tickets can be purchased at Career Services in 205 Killian Annex. \$*
- 16th** **Physical Therapy & SLP Career Fair\***  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm, UC Grandroom
- 24th** **Construction Management Career Fair\***  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

## March

- 10th & 11th** **Teaching Opportunities for Non-Teaching Majors**  
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm, UC Catamount Room

- 16th** **Summer Jobs and Internships Fair\***  
11:00 am – 2:00 pm, UC Grandroom
- Etiquette Reception\***  
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm, UC Multipurpose A&B  
*This event is intended to teach students proper networking at its best. Attire is business casual. If you are interested in participating, please visit Career Services or call 828.227.7133. \$*
- 17th** **Panel Discussion**  
4:00 pm - 6:00 p.m., UC Theater
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Career Fair\***  
Details TBD
- Corporate, Non-Profit, and Government Career Expo \***  
Details TBD
- 23rd** **Education Recruitment Day\***  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

### ***\*For all Expos and Career Days***

Business casual to professional attire is required. Students and alumni are encouraged to bring several copies of your latest résumé. We also suggest uploading a résumé into JobCat. If you need assistance with developing a resume, please visit Career Services (205 Killian Annex) or schedule an appointment with a career counselor 828.227.7133.

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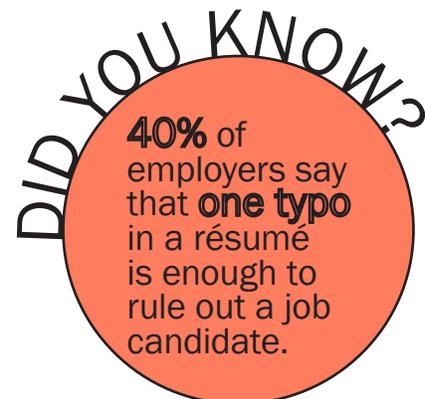
and dozens of other career websites post new job ads every day. Finding employment can be like a full-time job, but the harder you work at it, the better your chances are of stumbling upon your dream career. Good luck!

### *About the Author*

*Melissa Bullard earned a Bachelor's degree in English Literature, then a Master's Degree in Spanish Language and Literatures from the University of Nevada, Reno. She has taught writing, literature, and Spanish classes, and is currently working as a freelance writer, translator, and piano teacher.*

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