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Congratulations Graduates!

BY BRANDY KIGER

This is it. After years of diligently pulling all-nighters, drinking entirely too much coffee and writing more papers than you ever thought possible, you've made it. It's finally over, and you are graduating. Now what?

Career Services would like to say, "Congratulations, Seniors. We're proud of all your hard work!" You have already accomplished a lot, but there's more ahead. We'd like to help you keep that momentum going as you head out into the "real world."

Our services are still available to you as alumni, and we would like you to take advantage of those resources. We have a ton of career-related material, career testing and resume help at your disposal, free of charge. We also have career fairs happening several times a year where you can network and meet potential employers.

JobCat and DISCOVER can be accessed through <http://careers.wcu.edu>, so feel free to search the job listings there and post your resume as well. Enjoy your graduation! When you are done celebrating, remember that we are still here supporting you 100 percent.



PERSPECTIVE: Disability Awareness in the Workplace

BY LANCE ALEXIS

When I was asked to write a piece concerning disability in the workplace, I was happy to oblige. As I was thinking about the topic, I could not help but feel disheartened that there was a definite need to write an article explaining the presence of people with disabilities in the workplace. My hope would be that in the many years since two impactful pieces of legislation concerning the topic, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, this would be a widely-known and accepted concept. While battles against sexism, racism and religious intolerance still occur, at least the basic tenets of these concepts are generally understood, as is the fact that there is recourse for those who experience such prejudices. People with disabilities comprise a group fighting multiple battles against prejudice without mainstream commitment. The basis of bringing about a new understanding lies in three interconnected forms of awareness: self-awareness, awareness of rights and employer awareness.

People with disabilities seeking employment must establish a level of comfort with being considered a person with a disability. This is not an easy task because the common model followed by much of society concerning disability is the medical model of disability (Seelman, 2004). This model is based on the perception of disability as a problem in a person's body in need of medical attention. Authority on disability is believed to be in the hands of professionals rather than those with disabilities. This perception is unfair because it is bound by the biased view of what the medical world deems normal or healthy (Seelman). It further proves unfair because the model objectifies those with disabilities since they are viewed based on their disability rather than their personhood (Smart, 2001). Many want to stop being viewed as patients and be given the opportunity to live their lives as workers, students, parents, etc.

PERSPECTIVE *Continued on page 3*

CAREER SERVICES PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS

Students and Alumni: Take advantage 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 resume 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.

Resume Critiquing Service

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

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.

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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*
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Want to get on the career path?
Use JobCat.

1. Loginto JobCat at careers.wcu.edu
2. Complete a personal profile
3. Upload a resume
4. Submit your online application by the deadline.

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

(Seelman, 2004). Because people with disabilities often find disability portrayed in a negative light, they try to retreat from a part of who they are (Michalko, 2002). This form of self-denial often leads to a retreat from friendship, kindness, love, affection, and other attributes considered positive in a social setting for fear of rejection and further separation (Firestone, Firestone, & Catlett, 2003).

Self-awareness ties into a person being motivated to learn more about his/her particular disability and methods to self accommodate including legal protections. The rights of people with disabilities to request necessary reasonable accommodations from employers has been established over the past decades and has been strengthened with the recent reauthorization of the Americans with Disabilities Act that goes into effect January 1, 2009.

Self-awareness and understanding one's rights assist in employer awareness. Regardless of the level of legal knowledge of a given employer, until that employer works with someone with a disability, he/she does not have the opportunity to apply it or fully understand what constitutes an accommodation. The majority of accommodations do not require much structural or financial commitment, and a person who is self aware and knowledgeable of the necessary accommodations associated with his/her disability will be able to present this fact as well as properly accentuate the benefits of accommodations no matter the cost. Disclosing a disability heightens the opportunity to be an effective employee and assists with increasing employers' knowledge bases. If a person does not disclose a disability, he/she is not eligible for accommodations. Without those accommodations, there is a heightened likelihood of struggle in the workplace.

Networking for Success

BY BRANDY KIGER

Preparing to enter the job market can be a scary thing. Wouldn't it be nice if you already had connections that could help you make the transition a little easier? This is where networking comes in handy. Networking is about assessing and utilizing the resources in your personal and professional life to aide you in your search for a job, as well as help you build a career.

The primary purpose of networking is to create and foster professional relationships. It is not about using people, but rather finding connections that can help you in your job search. You have to remember, however, that networking is a two-way street. Look for ways that you can also contribute to the relationship. This will make your networking most effective.

Benefits

The reasons for networking are numerous. Many job opportunities fly under the radar and are never posted. Instead they are snapped up by people with the right connections. By building a network, you have access to those connections.

Networking also allows you to receive advice, tips and strategies for entering your job market. Talking with people in your field will also open doors to insider information that you won't find on the company website. You can look to those who are currently hired for details on what the job environment is like, what is expected of employees, and what it will take to secure and succeed in the position you are applying for.

The willingness to overcome social concern and disclose a disability to an employer has an effect beyond the workplace. Interactions between people with disabilities and those without, especially in professional settings, are essential to break down the barriers between disability and non-disability. The importance of those interactions lay in the fact that a lack of understanding, knowledge, and exposure between members of the two cultures is the primary obstacle to acceptance (Senelick & Dougherty, 2001). That significant exposure is contingent upon heightened awareness.



Lance Alexis is the Director of Disability Services at Western Carolina University and can be reached at 828-227-2716.

References:

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- Michalko, R. (2002). *The difference that disability makes*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
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- Smart, J. (2001). *Disability, society, and the individual*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.

Finding Contacts

When building your network, it's important to have a plan. Begin your net-working through people you know. It will help make the process less intimidating. Make a list of all your personal and professional contacts, and then analyze how you can benefit each other. Who do you know? Where do they work? What jobs have they had in the past?

Start with your immediate family and friends, then look to college professors, previous employers, clubs, or student organizations to which you belong. From there, you can move outward into friends of friends, social networking, and other associations and organizations. Taking it step-by-step makes the process less intimidating.

NETWORKING *Continued on page 4*

Spring 2009 Calendar of Events

February

3rd 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. The event is \$15.00 per person; cash, check, or student meal ticket/CatCard will be accepted. Tickets can be purchased at Career Services in 205 Killian Annex.

11th Construction Management Career Fair*
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

17th Physical Therapy & SLP Career Fair*
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm, UC Grandroom

March

10th Summer Jobs and Internships Fair
11:00 am – 2:00 pm, UC Grandroom

Etiquette Reception*
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm, UC Multipurpose A&B
This event is intended to teach students proper networking at its best. Attire is business casual. The event is \$5.00 per person; cash, check, or student meal ticket will be accepted. If you are interested in participating, please visit Career Services or call 828.227.7133.

11th Corporate, Non-Profit & Government Career Expo*
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, UC Grandroom

12th Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Career Fair*
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

18th Teaching Opportunities for Non-Teaching Majors
& 19th 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm, UC Catamount Room

24th 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 resume. We also suggest uploading a resume 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.

NETWORKING

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Volunteering and service learning projects are also a good way to build connections and find additional resources in your field that you might not necessarily find otherwise. You can also use these experiences in your resume.

Once you make this list of potential contacts, create a database or some other sort way to track them that will allow you to record who you've contacted and what you've learned from the experience. By keeping records, you can use that person's name when you make your job contact (with their permission of course!) and also follow-up on any other references they give you. It's also polite to send a "Thank You" card to let them know you appreciate their time.

Here at Western Carolina, you can start building your network by talking with professors and mentors in your major and attending career fairs. Both of these resources can put you in touch with real employers and give you a head start in your job search. So, attend a career fair, call your advisor, or just stop by your department. People want to help you; you just have to ask.

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has a Facebook page!

Become a fan, and we can send you up-dates on Career Services and Co-op Event Happenings.

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"WCU Career Services" on Facebook.

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