

CAREER JOURNAL

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

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Located in Killian Annex, Career Services and Cooperative Education, is here to assist current students and alumni with a variety of career resources.

PHOTO ESSAY: Student Organizations Making a Difference

In this edition, we highlight student organizations that have organized or assisted in programs and initiatives that have impacted student career development across the campus of Western Carolina University.

PHOTO ESSAY Continued on page 4

Spring Event Calendar

Wanting to improve your current résumé, learn proper rules of reception etiquette, or attend an upcoming career fair? Our Spring Event Calendar has plenty of opportunities for you. You definitely don't want to miss what we have planned!

EVENT CALENDAR Continued on page 11

Narrative: Advice from a Young Alumna

by Bessie Goggins, Executive Director of the Literacy Council of Highlands

As a small child, I thought I could choose a different career for each day of the week to meet my interests: on Mondays, I would work as a dentist, Tuesdays a lion tamer, Wednesdays a firefighter, Thursdays a vet, and Fridays a cucumber peeler. While none of this seems feasible now, I do applaud myself for having a plan during grade school. And more importantly, I am proud of my flexibility. As the executive director for the Literacy Council of Highlands, I have no daily contact with lions or cucumbers. Perhaps it is better that way.

Rather, I work with the community, meeting engaged citizens and helping people learn to read. I flex my skills in communicating – both written and oral – on a daily basis, and I enjoy what I do. My two undergraduate degrees in English and communication, as well as my master's in English, have already served me well. And yet, I did not know that public relations even existed until second semester of my sophomore year at Western Carolina University. And English, while my favorite subject in high school, didn't seem like a path towards any job outside of



Photo courtesy of Bessie Goggins

YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE Continued on page 3

CAREER SERVICES' PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS

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

JobCat & Other Job Searching Services

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 or mashe@email.wcu.edu and make an appointment to discuss it!

Career Services Information

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

Mardy Ashe, Director and Career Counselor
mashe@email.wcu.edu

Michael Despeaux, Career Services Coordinator and Career Counselor
mdespeaux@email.wcu.edu

Whit A. France-Kelly, Graduate Assistant
wfrancekelly@email.wcu.edu

Jessica Ross, Administrative Support Specialist
jcross@email.wcu.edu

Steven Wilson, Career Resource Specialist/
On-Campus Employment
wilsons@email.wcu.edu

Jill Norton Woodruff, Special Events Coordinator
jwoodruff@email.wcu.edu

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

*Publisher: Michael Despeaux
Editor/Photographer: Whit A. France-Kelly*

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. View 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.

ATTENTION PRIORITY ALERT

WANTED

- . Looking for a career mentor?
- . Interested in becoming a mentor?
- . Know someone who should be a mentor?

Brought to you by WCU's Office of Alumni Affairs, Family Association, and Career Services.

For more information regarding our 2010-2011 Career Mentor Program, please contact Mike Despeaux or Mardy Ashe in the office of Career Services.

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!



YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE Continued from page 1

academia. As I reflect on the path I have taken to where I am today at 24 years old, I have some memories, experiences, and thoughts I'd like to share with you.

Yes, I am still young and learning about who I am and what I want to do, but I have realized that I never want to be too rigid or stagnant in my life; perhaps this is my largest piece of advice to those of you reading my narrative. After all, if I had been too rigid in my plans to become a lion tamer, I would have missed out on the wonderful opportunities WCU has offered me as both an undergraduate and graduate student.

But first, let me say that I have not always been a Catamount. During my freshman year of college, I attended Campbell University, and I had hollow aspirations of being a pharmacist. I had never been crazy about science or math, but I always did well enough to take the Advanced Placement Exams. And when I heard about pharmacists' paychecks, dollars bills "cha-chinged" in my eyes. Like many young adults, I thought that law and medicine were my only two options, so I launched myself down the path of pharmacy with little thought or research.

And I didn't like it; some people love it, but after my time in calculus, organic chemistry, and a local pharmacy, I couldn't imagine myself being happy as a pharmacist. The epiphany came to me when I visited my senior English teacher, Miz Mac, who had asked a handful of her recent high school graduates to talk to her new crop of seniors. Questions poured from the audience about classes, dorm life, and college in general, but many of my responses were flat. At the end of the seminar, Miz Mac pulled me aside and asked me about my passion. While I didn't have an answer at that moment, I knew I had to change my direction and forget the idea that big bucks equal happiness.

After that conversation, I transferred to WCU to be further from home, gain independence, and discover my passion. I hoped I'd find happiness, and I did. Shortly after arriving at WCU, I declared my first major in English, and within a semester, I declared my second degree in communications. My foci revolved around professional writing and public relations, two concentrations that I thought paired well together. In addition, I had fun in my classes and I enjoyed my homework assignments. I found my classes playing off one another all the time, preparing me for

YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE Continued on page 9

The Benefits of Networking

by Whit A. France-Kelly, Graduate Assistant

With the increasing trend in social media outlets and online networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn, university graduates now more than ever are taking advantage of the benefits they offer. On the collegiate scene at Western Carolina University, students have the opportunity to network and meet board members, alumni, faculty, and staff members at various campus events, community activities, career fairs, and professional conferences. With this, students and alumni can start to develop and build their social and professional relationships for continued success in their professional career. For current students, once you have declared your major, it is important to get to know individuals in that specific field. Joining major-specific clubs and organizations may also be beneficial in the future for character references or when fostering a mentor/mentee relationship.

With an alumni base of 57,000 members, Marty Ramsey, Director of Alumni Affairs states, "Whether you want to find old friends, make new ones, or stay up-to-date with your WCU family through news and events, our staff is here to assist you with this process. In our office, we provide many opportunities and resources that alumni and young alumni can partake in that can assist in bridging the gap between the two roles."

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING Continued on page 10

NETWORKING RESOURCES:



Family
Association

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Western
Carolina
UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Photos and Essay by Whit A. France-Kelly

Across Western's campus, student organizations are preparing their members and students at large for the professional world. Some stand out by organizing programs and initiatives that impact student career development. In this photo essay, we highlight organizations that recently provided students with grand opportunities to gain skills and make themselves more marketable.

Ben Ward, Society of Automotive Engineers



Ben working on an upcoming SAE project.

NEXT PHOTO

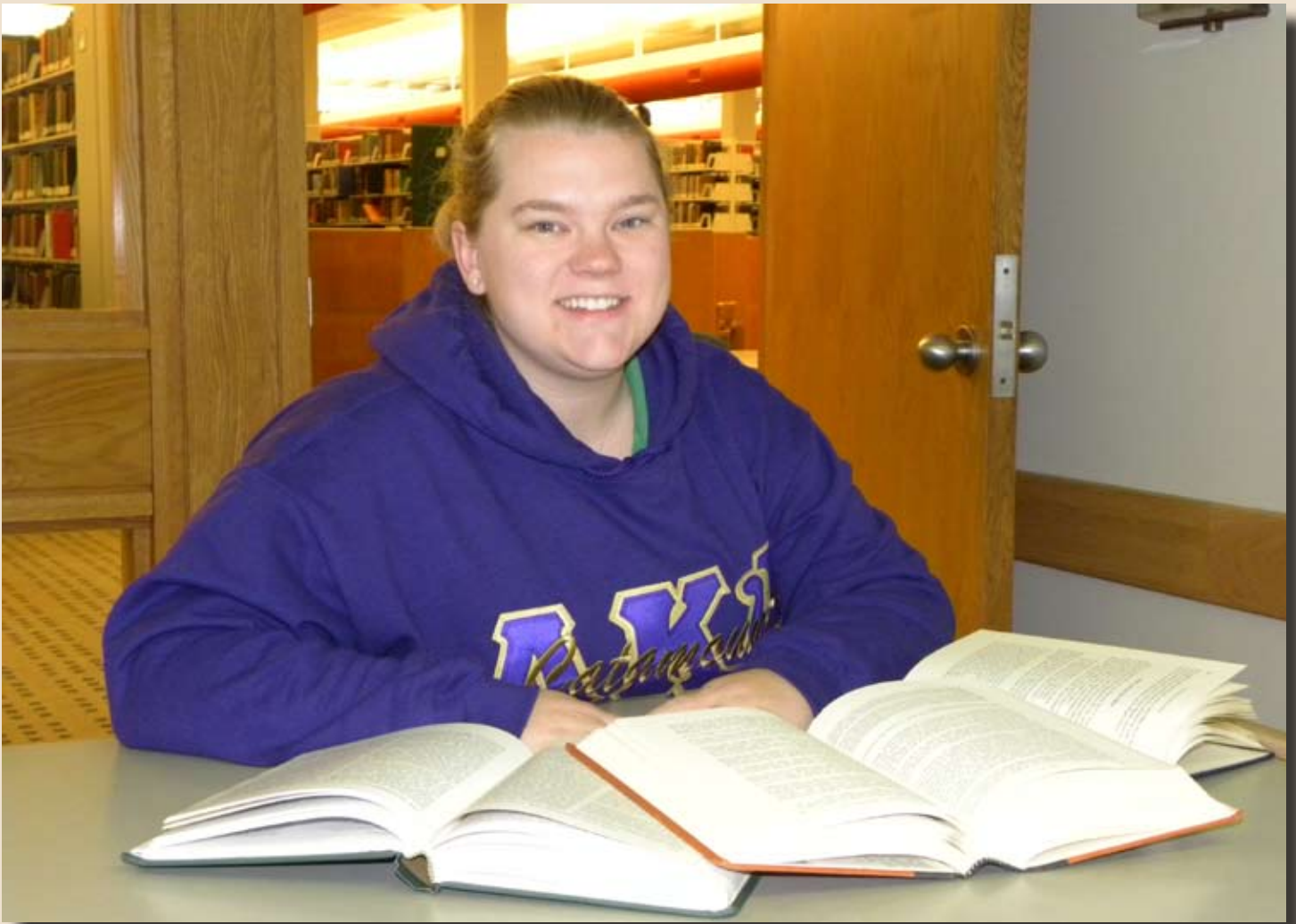
Benjamin Ward, junior, of Cullowhee currently serves as Western Carolina University's Vice-President for the Society of Automotive Engineers. With 15 current active members, SAE participates in different project-based activities each semester and submerses students in a hands-on environment where math, science, and technology are applied to solve special problems and establish goals. This semester they are building a quarter-scale Formula One car in preparation for a national competition in West Virginia next year that they hope to enter. SAE offers students opportunities to learn about different technical aspects of automotive engineering and presents interaction with local companies for the future. Other activities offered throughout the year include hot dog dinner fundraisers, food drives, and monthly business meetings.

"The Society of Automotive Engineers provides hands-on experience for our members that is relevant to their future careers. We aim to apply knowledge and information taught in the classroom to real world situations for students looking to work in the automotive field. It is beneficial to our population because it helps to give them a sense of what they may be asked to do outside of what is taught at Western."

Aimee Higgins, Alpha Kappa Psi Fraternity

Aimee Higgins, senior, from Raleigh is the current President of Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional business fraternity, at Western Carolina University. A member since 2007, Aimee and her fraternity see the importance of availability of career-related activities for students. With 20 active brothers, Alpha Kappa Psi provides activities for all students including time management workshops, sessions on how to dress professionally for interviews and career fairs, and how to manage stress effectively.

"We take to heart the motto of Alpha Kappa Psi: 'Shaping people, shaping business.' We hope to shape students to become an effective part of their future business. AKPsi provides opportunities for students that are applicable while in college and especially after graduation in helping to prepare them for the outside professional world upon graduation. We feel that these skill sets and leadership experiences are imperative for the business setting, and we pride ourselves on furthering the educational welfare of members."



[PREVIOUS PHOTO](#) | [NEXT PHOTO](#)

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Kristen Rivers, Resident Student Association



Kristen showing a triboard she and her council put together for a North Carolina Association of Residence Halls conference held at East Carolina University.

Kristen Rivers, senior, of Asheville has been the President of the Resident Student Association for the past three years. With more than 3,000 members on campus, RSA offers many activities for students where they are able to meet, socialize, and network with other current students. Other RSA projects include service-based events, Open House information tables, and hall council events. RSA helps to develop the leadership skills of students residing in the residence halls, provide leadership training for campus leaders and provide opportunities for members to present at local, regional, and national professional conferences for residential living and student affairs.

"Last semester we worked closely with The Center of Leadership to assist in the planning and implementation of the P.R.I.D.E. (People Really Involved Developing Everyone) Leadership Conference held at WCU. It was a great opportunity for professional staff members to present to campus students and to help further develop their leadership skills for the benefit of the campus of WCU [and their future careers]!"

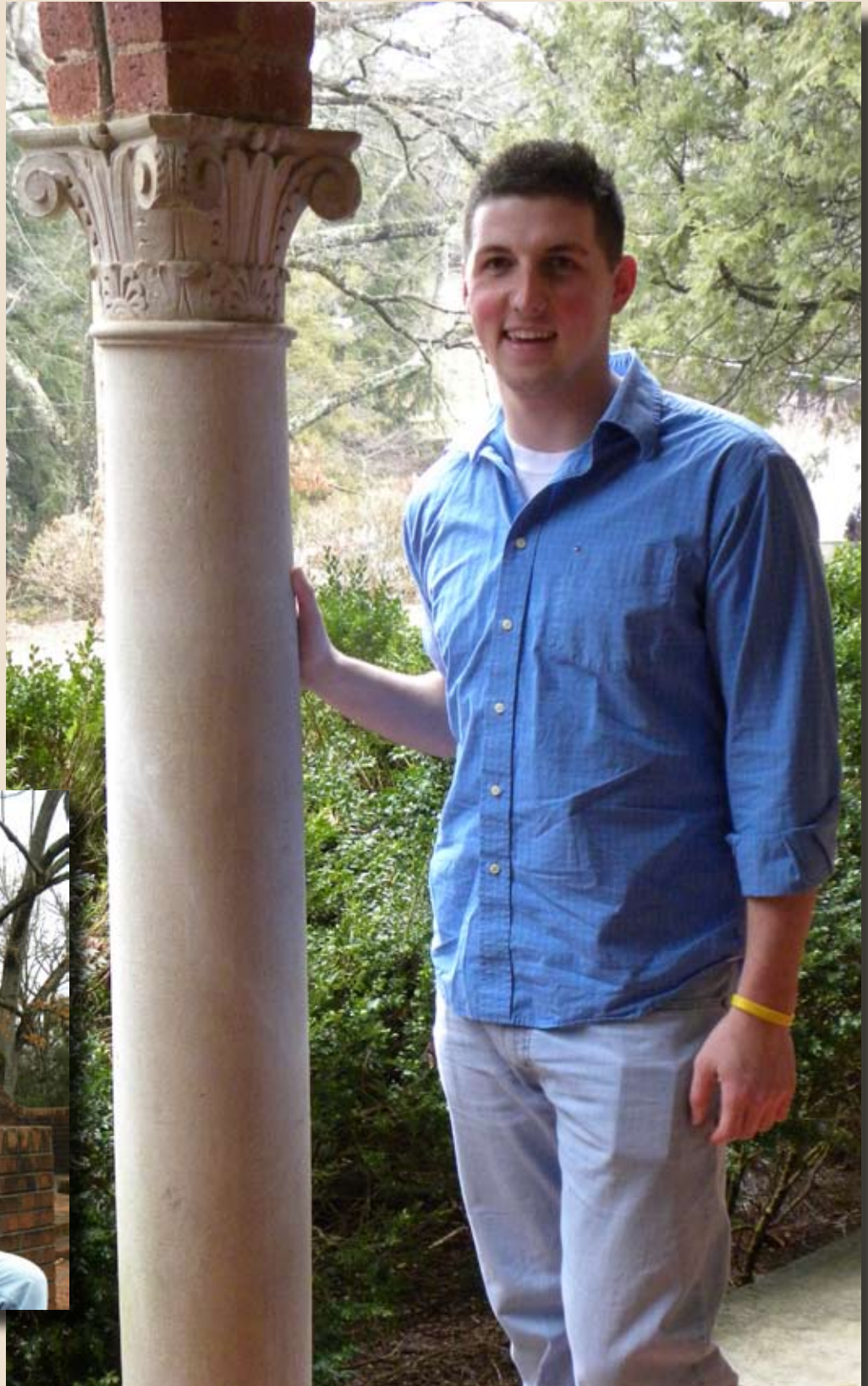


[PREVIOUS PHOTO](#) | [NEXT PHOTO](#)

Justin McCann, Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity

Justin McCann, senior, of Mooresville is the current President of Lambda Chi Alpha, a social fraternity, at WCU. With 35 members, Lambda Chi Alpha prides itself on the notion that education comes first and focuses on personal character development through leadership, scholarship, community service, and positive social experiences. Through participating in initiatives on campus including the etiquette dinner, group study hall sessions, résumé workshops, and other career-development programs, Lambda Chi Alpha “seeks to promote higher education by providing opportunities for academic achievement and leadership” (LCA national website).

“Our Scholarship Chair works with different offices on campus to provide career-related programming events for our members to partake in during the semester. It is our goal to prepare our members to be successful after graduation. With an emphasis on education, I feel that our brothers are ready for the job market that awaits them after graduation. Armed with tools learned in our programs; they have a better chance to succeed.”



PREVIOUS PHOTO

Want to get on the career path? Use JobCat.

Western's customized portal into the Experience network



Get On Track With JobCat

Frustrated with big, impersonal search engines that serve millions, promote jobs that seem sketchy or don't even exist, and yield very few results? Try JobCat, Western's Experience-based job search engine that is tailored for you. Here are a few reasons you should use JobCat:

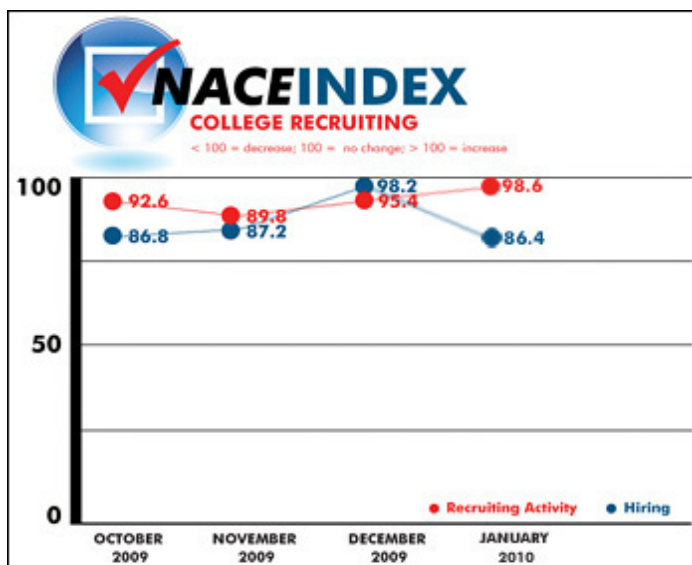
1. If an employer contacts us to list a job, co-op, or internship, we always upload it into JobCat.
2. JobCat is a special service customized for Western, but it connects to Experience.com, a company that serves universities and the employers who recruit them.
3. You can upload several versions of your résumé into JobCat and be prepared to apply for any job.
4. You can enter JobCat to search for strong employers in most industries and find contact information.
5. You can find additional information about our recruiting events in JobCat, including a participant list.
6. As of August 2010, you will be able to enter JobCat and click on "Mentors" to search for a Professional Career Mentor!

Important: To navigate within JobCat and to apply for most jobs, you will need to log in, initially complete a user profile, and familiarize yourself with its features. Please call our office if you have trouble logging in or using the program. Don't wait until the last minute!

On-Campus Recruiting Activity Climbs, Hiring Plans Slip

from NACE Index: Spotlight Online for Career Services Professionals, February 3, 2010

Editor's note: This research indicates the increase importance of including campus recruiting activities in your job search during this employment market. Also, it illustrates the ever-increasing value of internships and co-ops, as these opportunities are being expanded, not reduced. See our event calendar on page 11.



The overall recruiting activity index for January 2010 is 98.6, which continues the trend toward increased on-campus activity first evident last month—the December 2009 index stood at 95.4.

However, the January college hiring index took a significant step back from the steady increases witnessed during the fall. The college hiring index declined from 98.2 to 86.4. In addition, 25.8 percent of respondents indicated they planned to increase hiring, a drop from December when 33.4 percent of employers polled said they expect to increase their college hiring. This suggests that there is still a considerable ways to go before the college hiring market fully recovers from its recessionary position.

One of the things to look for in this year's spring recruiting season is the focus on internship recruiting. A number of respondents to the January poll indicated that they will be eschewing full-time college recruiting but maintaining or increasing their internship and co-op hiring. This explains why the college recruiting activity index continues to improve while the college hiring index has dropped in the past month.

Poll results are reported as an index with scores ranging from 0 to 200: 100 on the index represents no change in hiring prospects; scores below 100 represent an expected decrease in either recruiting activity or hiring levels; scores above 100 represent an expected increase in the short-term level of recruiting or college hiring. NACE is conducting its February poll February 1 through March 1. Results will be reported in Spotlight Online and on www.nacweb.org.

YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE

Continued from page 3

my exodus to the finale of job searches, résumés, and interviews. But before I could do that, I had some internship hours to fulfill.

When I first started looking for internships, I thought it would be a piece of cake. While earning two degrees, I had maintained a 3.9 GPA, so I thought businesses would fall all over themselves to pick me up as an intern. Rather, I discovered that many of the places I initially contacted felt that interns were a liability and too much trouble to train. After my fifth less-than-dazzling phone conversation, I made the decision to visit WCU's Career Services; I didn't know what to expect other than advice. And then I met Michael Despeaux and Mardy Ashe, two people whom I still turn to for advice.

Entering Michael's office for the first time, I sat in the chair and explained my situation. My tone probably held frustration and anxiety; because of my choice to earn two degrees, I needed two internships for the summer instead of the standard one. He listened to my concerns and widened my narrow approach to internship searches. We discussed possibilities at hospitals, nonprofits, and Fort Bragg, the military base in my hometown. My eyes lit up at the mention of the Army base. Growing up as an Army brat, I always felt connected to the base, but I had never considered working there as a civilian.

Within a month, I had contacted Fort Bragg's Public Affairs Office and landed an internship for the summer. I worked for the *Paraglide*, a weekly newspaper for the base, and I loved it! Everyone was friendly, and the opportunities for gaining experience were innumerable. I had multiple stories on the front page, and I had my stories and photos cover the first page of the sports and life sections multiple times. What a portfolio boost! I worked with civilians and soldiers of all ranks, and my résumé escalated in worth.

In addition, I found an internship working for the North Carolina Telecommunications Industry Association, a nonprofit organization that works with many of the telecommunications companies in North Carolina. NCTIA hosts conferences, trade shows, and other events to keep the companies knowledgeable about updates to laws, technology, and more. For NCTIA, I wrote public service announcements, developed newsletter stories, and created flyers for upcoming events. Again, I had a boost to my portfolio; at that point, I could do more than tell employers what I could do. I could show them!



Photo courtesy of Bessie Goggins

With one more semester of school to go, I decided to try for one more internship. Although I had already completed two internships that gave me stellar experience to talk about in an interview, I thought that a third internship would just sweeten my stories. Plus, since declaring my degrees, I had wanted to work public relations for a university; hence, I knocked on the door of Bill Studenc, senior director of news services at WCU's Office of Public Relations, and asked for a chance. He gave it to me, and funnily enough, I have pretty much been there ever since!

I started with a semester-long internship during Fall 2006, and after a brief hiatus, I returned in Fall 2007 as a graduate assistant before turning into my current classification as a part-time employee. For the past four years, I have developed quite the portfolio with news stories and features published in newspapers, newsletters, and magazines. I find my experience at the office to be invaluable, and I can discuss my aptitude for juggling deadlines, maintaining contacts, and communicating with multiple publics in any interview. Whether trying for a job in public relations or another field, my lessons learned at the office have developed into transferrable skills I can use anywhere. Perhaps this is a place to

YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE Continued on page 10

Career Mentor Opportunities at WCU

Starting in August 2010, we will launch two mentor programs designed to provide an additional resource for students as they develop their career goals, build skills and experience, connect classroom knowledge to real-world settings, and create a network.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER MENTORS will be searched for and contacted through our online program, JobCat. Alumni, employers, and friends of the University represent a large number of fields and a wide range of experience, from bright, young professionals to senior leaders. You can contact a Professional Career Mentor in your field to gain résumé tips, seek advice about starting your career, shadow them on the job, or even secure internship or co-op opportunities.

PEER CAREER MENTORS will represent each college at the University and be reached through our office by calling (828) 227-7133. Peer Career Mentors will provide résumé advice, teach students how to use job search technology, give advice regarding career event opportunities, offer group presentations, and serve as liaisons between Career Services and the classroom.

For more information, please visit <http://www.wcu.edu/26695.asp>

BENEFITS OF NET- WORKING

Continued from page 3

Starting in August 2010, the Office of Alumni Affairs, Family Association, and Career Services will be hosting a professional career mentor program that will connect current students to alumni, employers, and friends of the University to provide students with experience and opportunities. By using JobCat, interested students can contact Professional Career Mentors in their field to gain résumé tips, advice on career-related decisions, and assistance when securing an internship or cooperative opportunity.

Distinguished guests of the university and Alumni are eager to provide outlets for students where they can be mentored and provide opportunities to foster and teach about their specific field. Ramsey stated, "Our Alumni and Alumni Board have been very successful in their careers and wish to share that knowledge with our current students. They want to pass on their knowledge to students and possibly provide internship opportunities in the future."

For more information regarding the 2010-2011 Career Mentor Program, please contact Mike Despeaux or Mardy Ashe in the office of Career Services at (828) 227-7133.

YOUNG ALUMNA ADVICE

Continued from page 9

pause and give advice again from my own experience: Wherever you work, you are gaining skills that can be used outside of that field. Think about what you do every day – whether you deal with cash, people, or machinery – and think about how that will apply to your dream job. Thinking about your transferrable skills will give you better responses in your future interviews.

As I mentioned earlier, I took a brief break from school after graduating in December 2006, when I fell flat on my face. I made multiple mistakes based on cocky assumptions: Because I earned two degrees in less than four years with a 3.9 GPA and had a strong portfolio, I thought I'd have no problem finding a job. Man, was I wrong, and the economy hadn't even tanked yet! Obviously, I didn't learn from my initial trials with finding internships. Rather than heeding Career Service's advice of looking for a job before graduating, I waited until after I walked across the stage with my cap and gown.

As soon as I walked off the stage, I sprinted into a frantic search for a job in my career field. Nothing turned up. And in desperation, I took the first job I could land as a bank teller for a statewide credit union. While this job is nothing to scoff at, it definitely was not my ideal job. I despised going to work every day, and as a well-recognized workaholic, that made me miserable! At this point, I feel another piece of advice brewing within me: While work is not your life, most of us have to work at least 40 hours a week. With only 168 hours in a week, and about 49 of them spent sleeping, you do not want to spend 40 hours of your week restless and unhappy. As cliché as it sounds, life is too short for that.

I realized that after eight months of tears and frustration, and to change my life's direction, I returned to school to earn my master's in English. I split my focus in two areas: technical writing and rhetoric. Both studies impassion me, and both are tools I can use for my trade. I can write grants, create user manuals, and develop websites, while understanding how people learn from communication on paper, on a screen, or through dialogue. Again, these skills are transferrable to almost any job! In addition to discovering my research interests in the classroom, I found my dream job in the classroom as well.

As a WCU graduate student, I had the opportunity to teach study skills for the Academic Success Program for the Summer 2008 and Summer 2009 terms, as well as teach Composition I and II during the school year sandwiched between those summers. I loved every minute of it. Engaging students in writing and helping them understand the credibility of sources invigorates me. I now know what I one day want to do with the rest of my life, although I'm aiming for a doctorate before I settle into that dream. My chosen career will take time; making life goals is a process, and to rush my journey would be rash. Rather, I'm taking my time and enjoying the adventure along the way. Each job I work from now until then supplies me with more stories for my future students and more transferrable skills as a faculty member. My dream is worth the wait, and it will remain flexible and open-minded to opportunities that come my way.

For now, I am enjoying every minute I work at the Literacy Council of Highlands. I look forward to my time in the office, working with children, tutors, and donors. I love writing grants, and I feel excited when I plan a fundraising event. I embrace the problems thrown at me every day; I look at them as opportunities to flex and refine my skills as a communicator. And maybe, if the opportunity ever arises, I won't turn down a chance to be a lion tamer or a cucumber peeler because I know that my time in public relations, in the classroom, and in a nonprofit would make me more suitable for those jobs too.



Photo courtesy of Bessie Goggins

Spring Event Calendar

March

- 16th** Summer Jobs and Internships Fair*
11:00 am – 2:00 pm, UC Grandroom
- 16th** Etiquette Reception*
5:30 – 7:30 pm, UC Multipurpose Room
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. \$
- 18th** Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Career Fair
11:00 am - 2:00 pm, UC Multipurpose Room
- 18th** Corporate, Non-Profit and Government Career Expo
1:00 - 4:00 pm, UC Grandroom
- 23rd** Education Recruitment Day*
9:00 am – 12:00 pm, UC Grandroom

**For all events*

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 résumé, please visit <http://www.wcu.edu/6685.asp> or schedule an appointment with a career counselor at 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.



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Franklin

Faculty and students representing our Environmental Health program participating in our Business Etiquette Dinner event on February 18, 2010.

Back row standing, left to right: Dr. Burton Ogle, Dr. Tracy Zontek, Neil Henry, Katie Graham, Alan Goggins, Samantha Connell, Annalise Lysen, Jessica Phillips, Brittany McCall, Michael Singleton, Emily James, Angelica Santos, Candice Lance, Samantha Kunze, Josie Prince, Jamie Wyatt, Anna VonCannon, Bill Wiseman; Front kneeling: Alex Martin, Justin McCann.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Zontek

Dr. Daly and students representing our College Student Personnel program participating in our Business Etiquette Dinner event on February 18, 2010.

Back row standing, left to right: Dr. Cheryl Daly, Beau Keen, Meghan Kearns, Monica McGuire, Melissa Franks, Devon Ossorio, Stephanie Franklin, Whit France-Kelly; Front row: Stephanie Wolf, Shelly Dunklee.