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## January 2011 Newsletter

Career Center, Illinois Wesleyan University

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# Beyond the Bubble

a look at life outside Illinois Wesleyan University



**What did you study while at IWU? Did that point you toward what you wanted to do for a living?**

I'm a huge believer in that everything in life appears at the exact moment that you need it. I was a struggling sophomore business major, and my grades were terrible. I had chosen business as my major because that's what my friends were doing- I wasn't particularly passionate about it. I got a call from Dr. Jack Fields, who was the registrar at the time, to talk to me about a D I'd received in a business class. I was horrified and a bit scared. I'll never forget [when] he looked at me and said, "So here's the deal. Business isn't really your thing, am I right?" I nervously looked at him and said, "No, not really." He then very patiently said, "Well, let's find something that you do like," and he proceeded to go down a long list of

potential majors before stopping at English. "How about English?" he said, optimistically. "English is good," I replied. "I speak English." He laughed and said, "You're now an English major, Mr. Rave." I truly believe that this happened for a reason. It set me on a course that I would have been otherwise too scared to navigate. I loved reading, and I could churn out papers with surprising ease. The big question was what was I going to do with an English major once I graduated, and that's where the Career Center became an invaluable resource.

**How did your internship with Good Morning America influence your future career decisions?**

My internship in New York was a defining moment for me. At that time, the thought of going to New York and working at a place like Good Morning America was something that happened for students that went to large universities in big cities, at least in my mind. The IWU Career Center and Ann Harding showed me that getting there wasn't as difficult as I'd thought. I knew from the moment that I landed in New York that this was where I was meant to be. I loved the energy at GMA and knew that whatever my career path was going to be after college that I wanted to be "in the mix" of the entertainment industry. I often tell people that my childhood was spent in Bloomington, but I truly "grew up" when I moved to Manhattan.

**On your website, it says that you worked on numerous public relations campaigns and high profile special events. What did you specifically do?**

When you're a publicist, there's pretty much nothing that you won't do for a client or for an event. Whether it's writing press releases, pitching clients

## ALUMNI PROFILE

**Robert Rave**

Class of 1996

Publicist and Author of  
*Spin and Waxed*

to publications, placing gossip items, picking up a celebrity's mom from her hotel—you do it all. The type of PR I worked in was pretty much a 24/7 job.

**What was one of your most rewarding or memorable experiences in public relations?**

I worked with a lot of high profile clients, but truthfully, those are the most forgettable. For me, the true joy of being a publicist is finding the client that you actually like and believe in and seeing them be recognized for their talents or product. It's always wonderful to see those clients' career truly explode and know that you were a small part in making that happen.

**What advice would you give to students who are hoping to publish their own work?**

In retrospect, I'm not sure I would have stopped working all together to write full time. Fortunately, I had saved enough money to be able to do it, but I think it's important to find a happy medium. Work at a magazine, write a blog, try and find a revenue stream that allows you to still be able to do what you love. Dedicate time to writing each day and the better you'll become. The money will eventually come. Also, like everything else writing is a business- know that! Think of creative ways to market your work as well as yourself. It's one of the first questions agents, publishers, film studios ask- how would you market this?

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# Career Connections

a newsletter from the hart career center

January 2011

## The Realities of a Changing Job Market

Due to the downturn of the economy several years ago, many students now believe that their career prospects are abysmal. Typical mass media outlets only purport that mindset further as headlines declare climbing unemployment rate and declining openings in the job market. But is this something soon-to-be graduates still need to worry about?

In November, the Midwest Association of College and Employers hosted their annual conference in Chicago. Each year, Dr. Phil Gardner of Michigan State University presents his team's research on the latest trends in job recruiting over the past year. The results of his study provide a mixed conclusion.

"Although *Recruiting Trends 2010-2011* reports a more positive outlook, its release coincides with rather gloomy labor market news from other fronts," Gardner said. "The recovery in the college market does not run deep at this time. Graduating students need to realize that the market is very competitive."

Gardner specifically refers to several factors that contribute to his idea. The first of these is employer intentions. According to *Recruiting Trends'* research, 32 percent of responding employers had definite plans to hire college graduates during the 2010-2011 academic year. This is an

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improvement from last year's 27 percent. At the same time, however, 35 percent of employers were uncertain as to whether they will hire college graduates or not - an improvement from the 42 percent reported last year.

"Both groups show a high level of uncertainty about the economy, with almost one-third of those who hired last year and almost one-half of those who did not awaiting more signs of recovery," the report stated. "Overall, total hiring will increase modestly by 3 percent, a significant increase over last year's hiring forecast."

As employer intentions appear to be slightly more favorable, the outlook for those with a college degree also seems to be improving. Hiring has increased by 10 percent for those with a Bachelor's degree.

Even those companies that do not plan on increasing their hiring level are taking on a significant number of Bachelor's level candidates. This is good news for IWU graduates who are planning to begin working after graduation. But the question still lies as to where this hiring is coming from.

The report said, "Small employers played an important role last year in stabilizing the college labor market, and this year, they are once again contributing positively to the hiring of new grads. However, this year's labor market is dominated by a resurgence in hiring by the largest firms. Weakness persists among medium sized firms and smaller firms at some degree levels."

Luckily, across the board, hiring for those with a Bachelor's degree is consistently on the rise. But does this



Photo courtesy of <http://economiccrisis.us>

trend apply to all majors?

The report stated, "Over 1,600 companies indicated that they would consider any major for a position. Representing 36 percent of all respondents, this figure is at a historic high. ...Sixteen percent of the employers will seek all liberal arts majors, which includes the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, and will actually hire more new graduates than the other groups."

For liberal arts graduates like IWU students, this is fantastic news. If a student has one of the most requested majors by employers (see chart on page 2), they may be well on their way to promising career prospects after graduation day. As for other majors, the pattern looks like this:

• **Physical and Biological Sciences:** Statisticians bloomed last year with companies newly interested in their services. While the same number of employers will seek statisticians, their hiring will be flat (down about 1 percent). Mathematicians, however, remain hot along with environmental  
**Continued from page 2...**

## Most Requested Majors (2010-2011)

Major	Percent of Employers Seeking
All Majors	36%
Accounting	26%
All Business	26%
All Technical	25%
Marketing	23%
Finance	23%
Computer Science	19%
Communications	17%
Computer Information Systems	16%
MIS Computer Science	16%
Computer Programming	16%
All Liberal Arts	16%
MBA's	23%

science majors. Overall, BS scientists should be able to find employment, though only 500 employers in this sample are actively seeking these majors.

- **Communications:** After struggling for the past two years, some of the academic majors in this group seemed ready to pull out of the doldrums. Public relations and advertising appear to have some momentum for job growth. The demand for these majors provides early signals to both job contractions and expansions. If hiring for these two majors begins to substantially improve, we may be headed for a much stronger market than captured in this report.

- **Health Sciences, including Social Work and Counseling:** The job market for these majors remains soft. Nursing, even in the midst of a shortage, will see hiring decline again this year.

- **Social Sciences and Humanities:** Companies who are seeking these majors expect to increase the number of jobs available by around 10 percent.

As far as specific industries go, hiring Bachelor's level candidates is not the same across the board. Specifically in legal services, education, and health services, hiring has decreased significantly - by 17 percent, 6 percent, and 8 percent, respectively. This comes

seeing an increase in BA hiring by 44 percent, as well as professional services (42 percent), retail (37 percent), administrative services (29 percent), and transportation (20 percent). So while hiring may not look as hopeful for some industries, in others, BA hiring is at historically high rates.

With all of this information, what can students do now to ensure that they are up to par with employer standards and standing out among all other prospective candidates? According to Dr. Gardner's research, most employers agree that students tend to fall short of their expectations. While resume presentation is better than ever before, professional demeanor, maturity, ability to articulate skills and competence, and expressed career interests and direction are all lacking.

Dr. Gardner said, "The liberal arts faculty have taken the high ground philosophically when it comes to the workplace. Their belief is that by properly training the mind to think, students can transition and succeed in any endeavor. Unfortunately, employers' demands to immediately deploy a well-trained hire on specific tasks overrides this belief. Liberal arts institutions must re-examine how they present themselves and articulate the value the liberal arts brings to the

workplace. They are going to have to come down from the mountain."

Additionally, specific venues for hiring employees are beginning to be utilized more than others. 80 percent of employers post open positions through career databases like IWU's Titan CareerLink, 61 percent recruit through internships with the company, 54 percent hire through career fairs, and 41 percent through resume referrals. Campus information visits, faculty, and interviews follow as recruiting methods, in that order. Social media outlets such as LinkedIn are also rising in popularity with 28 percent of employers saying that they use these sources in their recruiting process.

Dr. Gardner also stressed the importance of timing. As it turns out, most companies have finished hiring by the fall. In fall 2010, the responding employers planned on increasing hiring by 16 percent, but only by 1 percent in spring 2011 and 9 percent in summer 2011. The moral of the story seems to be that students need to start submitting their resumes a lot earlier than most of them plan to.

With all of this information, the job hunt seems a bit overwhelming. But to provide some reassurance for the panicked college student, Dr. Gardner had sound advice to keep in mind from a participating employer.

"Make contacts and connections everywhere you go in your chosen field. Volunteer at an organization you would love to work at - we hire volunteers many times for paying positions because we know them. Take time to write an exceptional cover letter and resume that will dazzle the employer, not end up at the bottom of the pile. Make sure it highlights your skills. I didn't have a high undergraduate GPA, but I had a ton of field experience, which is what I highlighted as a 'hook' to draw potential employers in. Follow application instructions, send thank you cards -not emails- and call if you haven't heard about a job. Persistence is a positive thing and shows you want to work for me and my organization. Go to conferences in your field and talk to presenters. Treat your job search like dating - you're courting the organization where you want to work."

# Cleaning Up Your Online Presence: Why and How?

There is a certain beauty about social networking sites. That is, if you're the stalking type. Not that I am, of course. I just very much enjoy seeing what that kid in my religion class who I never talk to did last weekend, if my two friends have finally made the step from "it's complicated" to "in a relationship," and exactly which university my friend of a friend is transferring to. Completely normal Facebook interactions! However, as the Internet opens up more and more venues of communicating every miniscule detail of your life ("Tracy enjoys canoeing, David Bowie, and buying used DVDs. Fascinating."), the allure of over-sharing information becomes greater. This can often lead to problems when a student's job hunt begins. Valerie Jencks, a therapist at Prairie Family Therapy, has hosted several seminars on this topic in hopes of keeping students from making poor choices online.

"[Before posting something online], a good rule of thumb is to ask yourself, 'If my mom saw this, would she be upset?'" said Jencks.

While this seems to be an obvious answer, a good number of students on any given Facebook news feed tend to post pictures and status updates that blur the line between private and public information. Although this is becoming commonplace in modern-day culture for young adults, for the

working world, most of these posts are better left offline.

"One good thing to do is to maintain two online profiles: a personal one that is private and only your friends can see and another that is professional and public," Jencks said. "On this one, don't divulge anything personal. There's a feature [on Facebook] where you can set your tagged pictures to only be seen by you. But you still run the risk of friends of friends seeing pictures of you that you might not want up."

But a person's online presence is not limited to solely Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites. An increasing number of websites are releasing private information that many students are not aware is available online.

"A good place to start is by Googling yourself or using 123people.com to see where you're coming up online," Jencks said. "Try entering a few variations of your name if you go by a nickname or use your middle initial. 123people.com will pull up every mention of your name online, including criminal records. You can also pay to find your full profile so you can check for misinformation. For example, there have been instances where a Joe Smith is looking up information on himself and finds that another Joe Smith has been convicted of a small misdemeanor. So it's a good idea to check for issues like that."

For those hoping that there is a quick solution to remove yourself from Google searches, it is unlikely that is an option. Jencks mentioned that much information is considered public record, including property value and residence address. This can only be removed with a court order for privacy.

"Remember that when you're in the college world, you have one single identity to present and that's just you as you are," she said. "But once you enter the job market, you have two: who you are in your career and how everyone else knows you. Now that the Internet is so open and not as private, there is a seduction to over-share, sometimes. So you really need to keep that in check."

If students are not mindful of their



Photo courtesy of <http://thebusinesssofsports.com>

online presence while in college, this can easily become an issue in the near future. Considering how easily one can find a Facebook page or a Twitter account, it is not inconceivable to assume that employers have the same amount of access. According to Jencks, in the event that students do not make wise decisions with their social networking accounts, they run the risk of not being taken seriously.

"Competition in the job market is fierce," she said. "Anyone who is looking to enter it has to prioritize his or her public image. Employers can be very selective. Some check candidates' credit history because the thought is that if you have a lot of late payments that may be a sign of a lack of integrity. Keep in mind that employers are looking to hire people that enhance their brand name."

## Upcoming Career Center Events!

- 1/17 - Interviewing Success: A Candid Conversation with Employers @ 4:15 p.m. (Welcome Center Auditorium)
- 1/18 - Extreme Makeover: Resume Edition @ 4 p.m. (Buck 202)
- 1/26 - Resumania! @ 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Career Center)
- 2/8 - Heath Professions Panel @ 7 p.m. (Welcome Center Auditorium)
- 2/9 - Bring It On: Standing Out in an Interview @ 4 p.m. (Welcome Center Auditorium)
- 2/16 - Business Etiquette Dinner @ 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Memorial Center)

## Upcoming Job/Internship Fairs

- 1/19 - Spring Teacher Recruitment Day @ 12:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Memorial Center)
- 2/4 - CareerFest @ 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace)
- 2/7 - IWU/ISU Spring Internship Fair @ 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. (Bone Student Center)
- 2/15 - IWU/ISU Spring Job Fair @ 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Bone Student Center)
- 2/17 - TeacherFest @ 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Drury Lane Theatre)