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## Advice for Class of 2003: Start Job Hunting Early, Be Realistic

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### *Advice for Class of 2003: Start Job Hunting Early, Be Realistic*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — When they were freshmen and sophomores, members of the class that will graduate from college in the spring of 2003 saw seniors getting multiple job offers, often with signing bonuses and other perks.

Now it's their turn, and it's a different ball game, says Warren Kistner, director of career services at Illinois Wesleyan University.

"I've been telling students from day one that this is a different year," says Kistner. "To be successful in the job search this year seniors will have to start early and have realistic expectations."

The 32nd annual Recruiting Trends survey conducted by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University was released last week and shows that while this is a bleak job market, signs point to the possibility of improvement by summer.

"The report confirms what we are seeing," Kistner says. "The decline started a year and a half ago. With the exception of a couple of bright spots, notably education and nursing, things are very, very tight. We have had the same or close to the same numbers of companies recruiting on campus this fall, but there is a significant difference in the number of positions that they have available."

Kistner adds that those areas that many students find most glamorous — consulting, for instance — were the first to dry up. Areas where there are still jobs, he says, always offered opportunities, but students didn't view them in the same light.

In addition to being realistic and getting started early, Kistner is encouraging seniors to tap into any and all sources that they can. For instance, he says, they should not pass up any job fairs that are available since many employers are attending job fairs where they can see more students in a single day than by visiting individual campuses.

"I also encourage our students to use the alumni mentoring program that we have established but to use it correctly by establishing a relationship with the mentors rather than expecting to take the shortcut and simply ask for a job," he says.

Kistner expects that all the negative headlines about job prospects can pose an obstacle. Students may decide there is no reason to look at all and delay the process.

Based on anecdotal information, Kistner does believe that slightly more of Illinois Wesleyan's seniors are considering graduate school this year than in the past.

"We won't know statistics for some time, but the feeling I get based on the numbers of essays I'm reading, is that we do have more students looking in that direction," Kistner says. "My only concern with this trend is that I want students to go to graduate school for the right reason. I don't think they'll be as successful if they see graduate school as only a refuge from looking for a job."