

Technology takes over

Minus computer training you may be left out in the cold

By DOUG LEVY

In today's job market, students who go from college to the working world without a technical background are reducing their chances for a job, according to three University professors.

Arthur Farley, head of the computer and information sciences department, Roger Best, head of the marketing department and Roy Halvorsen, a journalism associate professor, all say technology plays a much larger role in the job market now than it did 10 years ago.

Marketing seems to be the area changed most by the technological boom. "There has been a tremendous explosion in the field,"

says Best.

"Computer systems and the use of computers have increased greatly."

If a student wants a job with a marketing firm, he or she should have a mixture of marketing research, consumer behavior and computer skills courses, Best says.

"If you're trying for a job with a consumer goods firm, you won't even get a second interview if you haven't had those courses."

Farley is quick to point out that a student with computer skills is one step ahead in the job market.

"Computers are a major aspect of communication today," he says. "There is no reason not to have computer experience, and if you have the capability to use a computer, it makes it that much easier to get along."

Students entering the computer field should be prepared to have a working knowledge of business applications and systems analysis, Farley says.

"An employer might say, 'Oh, I want an accounting system designed for IBM,' and the worker would then need to have experience in systems analysis."

In journalism, Halvorsen contends that the old standbys of spelling and grammar are just as important today as they have ever been.

However, he says, "The main thing a journalist needs to use is a VDT (video display terminal), and most people can learn to use those within a few hours."

A basic background in computer operations is a definite edge for the average student, says Halvorsen.

"People able to cope with computer language will be better prepared if technology evolves."

For marketing majors, contrary to those in journalism, today's technology-oriented society makes the basics of a decade ago obsolete, Best says.

"The students of today know more about consumer behavior than I was taught as a Ph.D. — and they're at an undergraduate level," he says.

The big difference now is flexibility, Farley says.

"What a person needs to know has really blossomed. That means that you have to be more flexible today. In fact, most of our students are put on machines they haven't used before."

All three professors are adamant in the belief that students should take

some computer courses that would allow them to build a basic background of computer-based knowledge.

"Oh, absolutely," says Best. "Computer experience is a fundamental skill today — students that have that experience will be way ahead."

"It would have to be a must — there's much more than just word processing out there," Farley says.

Adds Halvorsen: "Computer knowledge is applicable in so many areas of human life that you will eventually use it one way or another."

"Almost every business now is using some kind of computer-based data system. That makes computer knowledge extremely valuable."

'Computer experience is a fundamental skill today — it's a must.'

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