



THE NATIONAL COLLEGE  
NEWSPAPER

SPECIAL REPORT

Report by  
**Jacki Hampton**  
U. Editor

This is the second in a series of special reports directed by U. editors.

After reading college papers from all over the country, the editors found that students were interested in the increasing number of career opportunities open to liberal arts majors. Other topics addressed in this report include first-job relocation and interview techniques.

Future special report topics planned include campus crime and gay rights.

### Interviews

## The \$24,000 Question

A job interview is a two-way process. Recruiters expect candidates to ask intelligent questions. According to Victor R. Lindquist, Northwestern U.'s director of placement and author of the *Northwestern Lindquist-Endicott Report*, appropriate questions show interest in the particular employer and an awareness of how you can fill their needs. Questions should not be so basic that the interviewer thinks you have not researched the company. Some good questions include:

- How will I be evaluated and promoted?
- Describe my typical first-year assignments.
- Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
- What are the company's plans for growth?
- Is the company financially sound?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- Is it company policy to promote from within? Tell me the work history of your top management.
- What are your expectations for me as a new hire?
- Why do you enjoy working for your firm?
- How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?

Source: *The Northwestern Lindquist-Endicott Report*

# The Game of Life

## Liberal arts majors make gains in the job race



ed at Boston U.

And liberal arts majors may be the best-prepared to undertake the jobs of the future, suggests Lawrence H. Smith, career planning and placement director at the U. of Oregon.

"I am put off by this notion that so many new jobs are being created that future jobs will require totally new skills," Smith said. "Unfortunately, some students react to this information by resigning themselves to a confused state. Why learn, choose a major, do much of anything, because the jobs that will be available in two to five years, we don't even know the titles of.

"Bunk. People get paid, companies earn money, agencies get funded because they do two fundamental things — they produce a product or service and they sell it. Future jobs may use new tools, but the skills required to use new tools can be learned. What remains very stable are the characteristics of people."

Smith says majors such as history, literature, anthropology and political science will best prepare students to face these jobs because they provide insights into human behavior.

### On-campus recruiting

Employers seem to agree with Smith. The private sector is hiring liberal arts students, long-recognized for their communication and interactive skills, at the highest rate since computers came on the scene in the 1970s. Even fields traditionally dominated by business graduates, such as finance, banking and insurance, are opening to these students. Thirty-six percent of the graduates hired into these fields in 1987 were liberal arts majors, according to the 1987-88 Collegiate Employment Institute Newsletter.

"The biggest problem for liberal arts majors is that they start off with a negative attitude," said Arizona State U. Career Services Director Jean Eisel. "They come into the interviews assuming we have nothing for them because no one asks specifically for a sociology major or a psychology major."

Eisel said these assumptions are false.

"More and more employers are willing to look at liberal arts majors." Thirty-six percent of the companies recruiting 1990 ASU graduates are looking for non-technical majors, as opposed to about 25 percent five years ago, she said. Employers are looking for students to fill positions in sales, retailing, publishing, editorial, customer service and management trainee programs, Eisel said.

Smith describes these entry-level positions as "window jobs," providing windows into other areas of the organization.

Barbara Koplin, career services director at Marquette U., said she has watched liberal arts graduates move through the ranks in advertising, public relations and insurance sales. "One young lady with a liberal arts degree has become tremendously successful in a manufacturing company in a rather technical area," she said.

### Who's being hired?

Like Eisel, Glenda F. Lentz, director of career development services at U. of South Florida, sees employers coming to campus that "never would have come five years ago."



"They used to use a hit-or-miss method, with newspaper ads, etc. But they weren't getting the caliber of people they needed to promote within the company," she said. Recently, employers such as Kraft Food have shown an increased interest in liberal arts majors at USF, Lentz said. "They need people who have the background to move into management. They're looking for people with an eye to train them for the future. Liberal arts majors have that broad background they're looking for."

Roy Chapman, manager of college relations for JCPenney, said, "We really recruit on an individual basis, regardless of what piece of canvas is hanging on the wall. If a student displays leadership and enthusiasm, they'll fit well into our management program."

Chapman said JCPenney consistently looks to liberal arts majors to provide these attributes. "They've always had great opportunities with us — our last chairman of the board was a music major," he said.

Other skills that liberal arts majors offer, according to Lentz, are the ability to think critically, do analysis and make judgements, and communicate. "Companies also are looking for the ability to write a persuasive letter or to make a persuasive presentation."

Eisel said some personal qualities can be equally important. "At a lot of schools, liberal arts majors tend to be the campus leaders, and companies are looking for that leadership," she said.

### What can undergraduates do?

Koplin said liberal arts students must develop these desired skills. "They need to get involved in extracurricular activities, but in a meaningful way — either by holding offices or taking charge of a project and seeing it all the way through.

"They need to find ways to demonstrate the qualities that employers are looking for," Koplin said. "Liberal arts majors are normally hired because it's perceived that they have better interactive skills with people. They can even demonstrate those through a part-time job. I've known employers to be impressed with a student who was bartending . . . or waitressing, because it shows they can deal with people in adverse situations."

Koplin also urges students to gain experience in their field. "I would tell all liberal arts majors to get exposure to the field they're interested in through an internship, to get some real meaningful work experience under their belt."

Lentz added, "I think it behooves liberal arts majors to get some technology training in their background. There are many liberal arts majors who end up on the management track and then they need it. That's just the way of life today."

She said creative thinking also wins points with employers. "Liberal arts majors are in many respects more flexible," she said. "They're more willing to be creative in getting the job done than a student who's spent four years studying for that job specifically."



TOM CASSELL, THE DAILY ILLINI, U. OF ILLINOIS

## Some not-so-trivial pursuits

In her latest book, *Going to Work*, Lisa Birnbach presents research on 50 companies in 11 cities, exploring their hiring and promotion practices, benefits, salaries, and work environments. Through interviews with employees and descriptions of each city, Birnbach gives readers a real-life picture of each firm.

Some of her unusual findings include:

**Best perk:** Each employee of Apple Computer in Silicon Valley, Calif., gets to select any computer to

work with at home. After a year, it's his to keep.

**Most fun dress policy:** At Levi Strauss & Co. headquarters in San Francisco, employees wear jeans to work.

**Most unusual recruitment inducement:** Dayton Hudson in Minneapolis gives watches to all their MBA recruits.

**Most generous vacation policy:** Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C., gives four weeks leave to all employees, plus unlimited sick days.



KATHY HAVEMAN, THE BATTALION, TEXAS A&M U.