



In tough times A degree isn't enough

For 23-year-old Wieclaw, who majored in aviation management at OSU, having a college degree did not earn him a high-paying or even satisfying job.

Instead, the current recession has forced him and countless other recent graduates into secretarial work, food service or retail positions — low-paying “McJobs,” as labeled by *Generation X* author Douglas Coupland.

“It makes me feel awful,” says Elizabeth Yow, a 1991 graduate of the College of William and Mary who majored in psychology. Yow does temporary work in the Greensboro area for an average of \$6 an hour.

“I’ve busted my butt for five years going through college and now I’m answering people’s phones.”

When their money runs out or when student loans come due, today’s grads may have little choice but to take any paying job, whatever that job may be.

A 1992 survey of 504 businesses, industries and government agencies conducted by Michigan State U. paints a gloomy picture of the job market for college graduates.

According to the study, company intentions of hiring new college graduates have decreased for the fourth straight year.

Even more sobering news comes from the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern U. in Massachusetts, as quoted in *Business Week* magazine: the median income for households headed by people under age 30 — \$24,500 — has dropped 21 percent in adjusted dollars from 1973.

“They face a tight market — one of the tightest in a 22-year history,” says L. Patrick Sheetz, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan.

“There’s a lot more competition for entry-level jobs than there used to be,” says John Challenger, executive vice president of Challenger, Gray and Christmas, a career counseling firm in Chicago.

That’s partly because newly unemployed veterans of the work force are competing for these jobs, says Mildred Culp, a career consultant with Executive Résumés and Executive Directions, International in Seattle.

Jennifer Beck, a 1992 communications graduate of the U. of Delaware, felt the squeeze when she applied for jobs at newspapers and broadcast stations throughout New Jersey.

“Because of the job market there are so many overqualified people applying for these jobs,” says Beck, who now waits tables and works part time at a clothing store for minimum wage. “I’m competing with them.”

The competitiveness of the job market comes as a shock to some grads, who did not consult their college’s career center or begin their job searches until graduation.

“I should have been looking while I was in school,” Beck says.

“Everyone’s always told me that it’s tough to find a job in journalism, but I felt that if I had the drive and determination I could find a job in my field no matter what the economic situation.”

Unfortunately that’s not always the case. “I didn’t know anything about the real world,” Yow says. “I thought I wouldn’t have any problem getting a job.”

Many counselors cite unrealistic job expectations of college graduates, whether they were about salary or position.

“College grads come out thinking ‘Where’s my \$40,000 or \$50,000 job?’ And just like anybody else, they have to earn that,” Challenger says. “It’s not there just because they graduated from college.”

But other college seniors are all too aware of the lean job market and have become discouraged as a result, says Stanley Brown, the director of Career Services at William and Mary.

“The seniors are not submitting [résumés] in numbers that they have before,” he says, “and that’s also

true on other campuses.... What happens is, people give up. They say, ‘What’s the use?’”

The future for college grads may be somewhat brighter, though, as the MSU study projected a slight increase in hiring for late 1993.

“I think it depends on what the new [Clinton] administration is going to do with the economy,” Culp says. “Unfortunately, I believe new college graduates are going to be facing limited opportunities and have to be more creative in their job searches.”

But they avoid some of those limitations by not taking a summer vacation, Challenger says. “A lot of graduates don’t start looking hard or taking their job search seriously until around September or October,” he says.

Challenger recommends holding out for as long as possible before taking “McJobs.”

“They distract you from finding a [permanent] job,” he says. “Better to go out and keep looking for the job you want rather than working for the local restaurant.”

Career counselors and consultants alike echo the warning not to get “stuck” in McJobs and recommend grads take night jobs to keep their days free.

“You need to take those hours that you’re not working and keep up your job search,” says Bruce Riesenberg, associate director of Career Planning and Placement at the U. of California, Irvine.

“If you don’t set goals it’s easy to let time slip by,” he says.

Yow’s advice to seniors on how to find a good job is succinct.

“Start now looking for a job,” she says. “Don’t go to Florida during spring break. Go on interviews. Kids from [the class of] ’93 will be competing with the class of 1990 and the class of ’91 and ’92 because they still don’t have jobs.”

When Scott Wieclaw entered Ohio State U. four years ago, he never

expected to work in a warehouse after graduation.

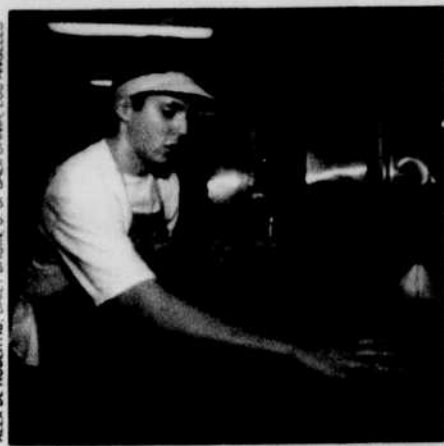
Now Wieclaw assembles, loads and delivers furniture for a company in Columbus, Ohio, making \$8 an hour.

“It’s not like putting on a suit and tie,” he admits.

“You go through four years of school and you don’t want to ride around in a delivery truck and deliver furniture.”



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