



the truth about grades

Dan Quayle managed to do it. But that doesn't mean every college student will find an employer as forgiving of a low grade point average as the American voter.

Quayle was a "C" student at DePauw U., not exactly a stellar academic record for the nation's former vice president. Quayle, though, managed to escape the shadow of his GPA on the road to success.

So is the emphasis colleges and universities put on grade point averages all a bunch of hype? That depends.

Tom Glisson, director of human resources for Bausch & Lomb, Inc., looks at grades first when he hires. "We are swamped with résumés now... if they are not in the over 3.0 category then they are not going to be given much consideration," he says.

That's not the case, though, at Eastman Kodak. "We look at GPA as only one indicator of future success," says Lisa Tietz, manager of professional staffing at Kodak.

Yet Eastman Kodak, like most corporations, still maintains a "hiring floor" of some sort. Students whose GPAs fall below this floor don't have much of a chance of getting hired.

"Grades are a factor of competitiveness.... GPA is not a disqualifier as long as it meets a certain level," says Leslie Mays, director of college relations at Reebok, International Ltd.

Steve Mortimer, a junior at the U. of Rochester, says that's the way it should be. "A student with a good GPA probably will get a good job faster but having a low GPA doesn't mean that a person will be a poor employee."

That's why the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts doesn't calculate grade point averages at all. "I don't want my future employer to use my GPA as a major indicator of whether I get employed," says Worcester senior Rick Daigle.

Even Worcester, though, gives students transcripts that list course grades from "A" to "C."

"Most employers ask for a transcript," says Daigle, president of the Worcester Student Government Association. "They think in their mind that this is a 'B' student, an 'A' student or 'C' student. But it's by no means the only means of evaluation."

And most employers understand that. "You can get some computer nerds or some engineer-

ing techie who can get a 4.0, but can they work in the real world?" asks Leon Scruton, vice president of corporate engineering at Bausch & Lomb.

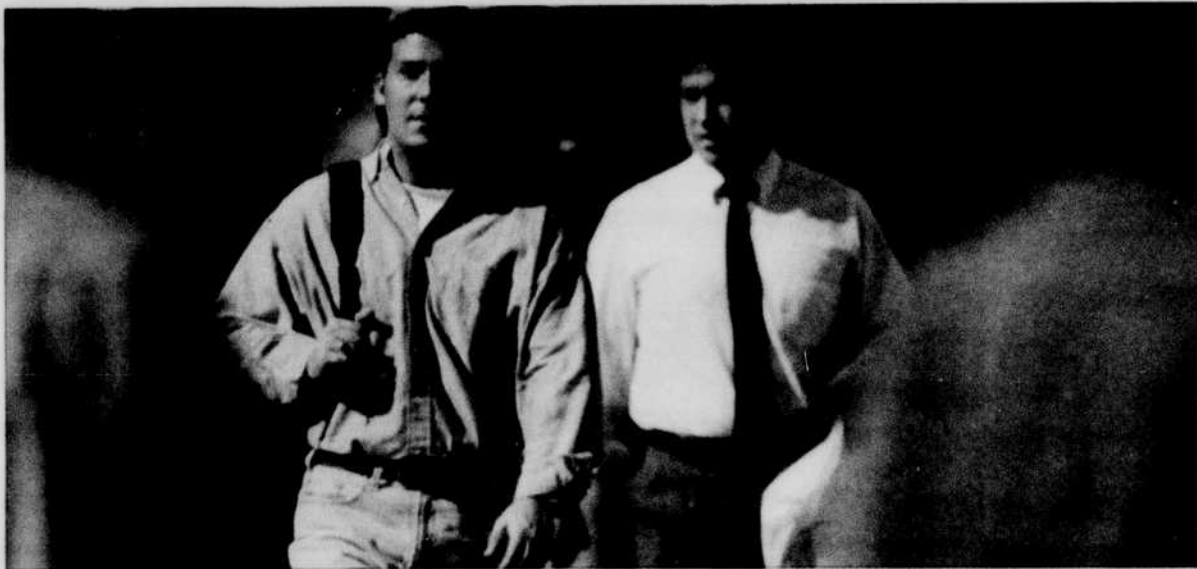
"They would never look at someone who got a mega GPA at the expense of everything else," says Emily Newton, director of the Center for Work and Career Development at the U. of Rochester. "It can't be grades for the sake of grades."

Unless, of course, you plan to go to graduate school.

that's more impressive than a high GPA.

Convincing students of that may not be so easy. "It becomes part of a self-esteem thing," says Elizabeth Neimann, a sophomore at Stanford U. "A lot of people here come into Stanford always getting good grades. It starts early in prep school where your major focus is getting into college."

That focus continues through college, where almost every scholarship award and scholastic honor carry GPA



By Phil Kusnetz, *The Campus Times*, U. of Rochester

Danielle Bechtold, a sophomore at the U. of Iowa, says she's never had a very good attitude about grades — until now. Bechtold is planning to go to law school.

"I'm definitely taking a more serious attitude to grades," she says. "I know they are important. My pre-law adviser says you really have to work on getting your grades up. They don't talk about what you learn."

Even then grades become less important for graduate school admission after students spend time in their prospective fields.

"Nobody has asked me for years where I went to school and what my grades were," says Barbara Jackson, marketing director for Reebok. Although Jackson never attended an Ivy League university, her résumé includes such high-profile companies as Pepsi. To an employer, she says,

qualification.

"We're basing everything on these tests and on these grades," says Judy Nicastro, a senior at the U. of Washington.

"But there's a lot more to a person than their GPA," she says. "If I have a 3.9, they say 'she's brilliant,' a 2.9, 'she's an idiot.'"

Professors like Bernard Feldman, who teaches physics at the U. of Missouri, St. Louis, knows labels like that aren't an accurate assessment of a student's potential. "I have seen students who were not very bright and put in a lot of effort and done phenomenally well."

That may be, but when college graduates try to get a job, the employer has the last word. "Bottom line — GPA, yes it is important," Kodak's Tietz says.

"Things blow in the real world, and those already in it are going to screw you just like they got screwed."



Kind of like hazing."

I found myself at one of those university-sponsored "networking seminars" the other day, surrounded by many name-tagged members of the work force, all of whom had pretty much the same thing to say: Things blow in the real world, and those already in it are going to screw you just like they got screwed.

Kind of like hazing. I did pick up a few things about interviewing and résumés and stuff. So I figured I'd pass them on to you.

I mainly learned for starters that the most important thing to remember in an interview is to punctuate your demands with a jabbing, pointing motion at your interviewer. In order to prove to your interviewer that you are not only a well-educated, responsible adult but also are not one to be trifled with, it is generally regarded as good form to begin the interview process by standing up and leaning right down into your interviewer's face while yelling "give me money," punctuating each word with a quick finger jab to your interviewer's midsection.

This is all considered proper because you are a fresh college graduate, and hence, know all there is to know. Your interviewer has most likely been out of college several years, and much of the education has probably worn off; hence, you are obligated to take the dominant role. Pick out flaws in either the interviewer's person or company structure and call them to attention. No flaw is too small to be overlooked. Everything from a particular mole you find unattractive on the interviewer to the company structure is fair game.

And when you're finished with that, hand the interviewer your résumé, which must represent you when you are not around. (Which is why most experts agree on using a process known as "lying" to write your résumé.) Even without the benefit of such sophisticated techniques, by broadening your system of classifications, you would be surprised how impressive your résumé can sound. I'd venture that all of us could list on our résumés that we

the signpost up ahead reads 'Real World'

once managed extensive real-estate holdings, financed such businesses as hotels and utility companies, owned and operated three railroad lines simultaneously, all while zipping about town in a silver sports car, with a guaranteed income of only \$200.

How? Ever played Monopoly? See? (I'd leave out the part about your repeated jail terms or if you drove an iron or an old shoe around town.)

Just remember to remain calm and always hold onto the firm conviction that you are doing the company a big favor. It also never hurts to bring a magazine. Job interviews tend to be really tedious. ■

Jason Torchinsky, *Daily Tar Heel*, U. of North Carolina