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Tom Patterson for the Emerald

David Redondo's duties at Carl's Jr. include cleaning the charbroiler and making fries.

Getting a decent job not always an easy gig

By Suzanne O'Kelley
for the Emerald

For many students, a regular paycheck is necessary to offset the expense of living away from home. Eugene's cost of living is on the rise, and the job market can be difficult to break into.

Desk positions exist for those interested in filing, answering phones and making photocopies. Short-term work, such as coaching, yard-maintenance or day-care, is available as well. Retail is a popular field for some. But according to a survey of 76 students, the majority of people entering the part-time work force are most interested in food-related jobs.

Granted, not all types of cuisine create desired work environments. Businesses classified as fast food are widely shunned, with grocery-bagging a close second. Food preparation, such as sandwich-making, ice cream-scooping and bakery work, are more attractive, though many say such jobs would be more tempting if they paid more than minimum wage.

Coffee shops and cafes rate slightly better, with restaurant-server positions topping most people's lists.

When judging the desirability of

workplaces, atmosphere and wages seem to be the most important factors.

"Why work 30 hours a week earning minimum wage when I can make the same in 10 hours with tips as a server?" University junior Rachel Welch said. "It's a no-brainer."

Yet serving positions must be more difficult in some way, or everyone would be waiting tables. Welch says serving is not an easy field to break into. Managers agree that the food service industry is hierarchical. Most servers started at the bottom and worked their way up.

Welch said she spent three years in a coffee shop before she was hired to serve.

"Moving up in the food industry is mostly about experience," she said. "It's just the employer's way of making sure you're reliable."

Since many employers have stacks of resumes to sort through while hiring, it makes sense that they want reliability in their trainees. But for those starting out, this can be a vicious cycle. It takes experience to make experience, so to speak. In "How To Find a Start-Up Job," Valerie Singer offers strategies to influence employers.

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