

Cupid strikes hard bargain with grads

Some couples believe love will endure distance, while others face separation

Caron Alarab

Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

Sometimes when the romance fades, it's not because there's someone else or because the sex is bad — it might be graduation and the prospect of making changes and moving in new directions.

But as some campus couples can attest, post-commencement love can overcome all distances, and long-distance friendship isn't always that bad.

John, a University junior who preferred not to give his last name, has less than two months with his graduating girlfriend before she leaves Oregon for a job in Las Vegas, Nev.

"She really is my best friend," he said. "It's going to be very hard without her around."

The couple, who met through mutual friends less than two years ago, have been talking about their post-graduation relationship plans since fall

term, and have decided to stick it out. "We really care about each other," he said. "Neither of us want to give up on it."

But not all those who are split up by graduation are willing to try the "long-distance thing."

Exchange student Bénédicte Schoepflin is returning home to France after graduation, leaving her neighbor and boyfriend Esteban Mendez — and their eight-month romance — behind.

"We're still on very good terms," the 22-year-old said. "But we are not considering a long-distance relationship at this point. We plan to stay in touch as friends."

Schoepflin said she hadn't intended to get involved with anyone when she moved to Eugene in September, and that the two began dating because it was convenient.

Mendez, who graduated last year, agreed that the relationship has been convenient, but he also said it's meant more than that.

"At first, it was just our personalities," he said. "But we definitely love

each other." Mendez is planning to visit Schoepflin in December, and said he has tried to be realistic about the relationship.

"I don't want her to go, but her visa is expiring, so that isn't an option," he said. "It's pretty sad."

When the end of the year doesn't send couples in different directions, some students say love can make the transition to into "the real world" a little easier.

After they graduate, senior Seth Revoal and his girlfriend Jennifer are moving to Portland together after dating for more than two years. The two first met at a party at Revoal's fraternity house, and he said he is more confident about their relationship now than ever before. He said Jennifer is "the best friend I have ever had."

"I think it's really easy for some people to just cut things off because they don't always appreciate what they have," he said. "But when you are ready to commit to someone, you just know it."

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Photo Illustration Danielle Hickey Emerald

Graduation is a time for many couples to evaluate their commitment to each other and decide whether or not to stay together.

Unemployment rate has some graduates questioning plans

With a state unemployment rate of 8 percent, many seniors are unsure of their career plans after graduation

Peter Sur
Freelance Reporter

Graduating seniors who walk the line this weekend may soon find themselves toeing another line — at the employment office.

The Oregon Employment Department reported a seasonally adjusted 8 percent unemployment rate for April, the latest month for which figures are available.

In April, the total non-agricultural payroll employment added only 100 jobs, instead of an expected 8,400 jobs, according to the press release. Private education and health services were the only two sectors recording growth in April, with an increase of 800 jobs. During the past two years, the number of unemployed increased by 43,200, which is more than the population of Albany.

"It's an overall lack of demand in most industries, except for private education, which has been doing better lately," economic analyst Chris Greaves said. "Financial services has been doing better with the low mortgage rates, and health services has done well with the aging of the population."

Greaves said when the national economy picks up, Oregon will tend to improve faster than the national average because of its focus in manufacturing.

State labor economist Art Ayre also cited growth in the health care industry.

"Given the aging of the population, it seems likely that it's an industry that will continue to grow, or at least be strong over the next decade," he said.

Career Center Director Larry Smith chuckled when asked about hot jobs for graduating seniors.

"The economy is not in a robust state, and one of the reactions to a stagnant economy is that employment gets put on hold," he said.

Smith said he was optimistic that the economy will rebound. He added older workers are now deferring their retirements, but new job openings will become available as they leave the workforce and the economy rebounds.

He advised graduating seniors to give an exemplary performance in their work, even if it's not their ideal job, because when the economy improves, those who performed well will advance their careers.

Students like Chris Covert, a double major in Japanese and Asian Studies, could benefit from that advice. When he changed his major from business, he said he quickly realized his career would probably have nothing to do with what he learned in school.

"I studied because I wanted to, not because I wanted to learn a skill," he said. "I'm not limiting myself to that."

Covert expects to have no trouble finding a job after this weekend's commencement ceremonies. But as for his long-term goals, "I don't know," he said, a feeling many graduating students may be echoing.

Peter Sur is a freelance writer for the Emerald.





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