

Fields of the future

by Melisa Hohlt

For the majority of college students, the ultimate goal is graduation with plans for immediate employment, whether they want it or not. Of course if the job happens to offer a lot of great benefits and a substantial check every two weeks, they consider it less of a burden.

For some, college may indeed be all fun and games, but everyone needs to come to terms with what it will take in the future to get the job that will sustain their life.

The way to secure the future is to get a good education, say those who are hiring, because tomorrow's jobs will require education or training beyond the high school level.

For example, an article from *Business Week* magazine reports that 6 percent of the current jobs can be filled by those with less than a high school education, while only 4 percent of the future jobs will use the same lenient guidelines. Similarly, 22 percent of today's jobs require at least four years of college, while 30 percent of the future jobs will require at least a college diploma.

A startling reason for higher education, says a *USA Today* magazine article, is that in the next 15 years, new jobs will be created that require skills that don't even exist now. Furthermore, and traditional jobs will be restructured, requiring newer and better skills. All this restructuring is happening because companies are realizing they must eliminate the unneeded positions and quickly create new ones to stay afloat in the ever-changing world of business.

Along with the restructuring, businesses are being more careful about the people they hire. According to *Fortune* magazine, one should be prepared to take lie detector and drug tests because many businesses are enforcing such measures. One should also be aware that many businesses

require applicants to take and pass a test that reflects one's ability to perform under the pressures of the job.

The *main* point to catch here is that education is critical to the job-to-person matchup. Workers must be prepared to adequately do the job for which they were hired.

For most of us, better education may just mean that we'll be working with what we like to call "more competent" workers. But for many Americans, increased educational requirements means a disadvantage.

According to the *Business Week* article, the mean scores on 1985 National Assessment of Educational Progress tests were 314 for whites, 263 for blacks, 286 for Hispanics and 265 for the poor. (Poor is defined as a child in a family of four that earned below \$13,300 in 1985.)

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This information, provided by the Educational Testing Service, Census Bureau, also showed the percentages of 18- and 19-year-olds who are not in school and who haven't graduated. This dropout rate for whites is 14 percent, while for blacks it is 18 percent and for Hispanics it is 29 percent.

An article from the July issue of *USA Today* says that the number of jobs in the next decade will increase faster than the number of jobseekers. Economists are expecting the number of entry-level jobseekers to drop in the next decade because too many Americans will lack the skills necessary to fill the jobs created by our economy. The lack of skills is directly related to the number of people who quit school before their educational

needs are met.

Another reason for fewer job hunters is that the population growth is leveling off, according to the *Business Week* article. As a result, the article continues, the United States will have fewer new workers to fill more and more jobs, and markets are sure to tighten.

Present figures, reports *USA Today*, indicate that from 1985 to 1995, the number of new jobs will increase by 15.6 million, while at the same time the number of people in the work force — those either working or out looking for a job — will increase by only 13.7 million.

If these numbers are correct, the end result would be a gain of 2 million American jobs, the magazine concludes. The article also says that such an increase could cut the

unemployment rate by about 2 percent, resulting in a "full employment" status of 5 percent.

Now if you're very far along in this college/get-a-job game, you're probably wondering what types of jobs are going to be big in the future. However, you may be disappointed to learn that many of the jobs are less glamorous than most college graduates would hope for.

USA Today says that future jobs will move away from manufacturing and toward service and information industries. According to the article, only 5 percent of the new jobs created were in manufacturing in the past 15 years, while 90 percent were in service and information.

Statistics from an August issue of *Business Week* magazine show that among the

low-glamour jobs, janitorial, nursing, truck driving and cashier positions rank pretty high on the list of jobs with the largest absolute growth between last year and the year 2000.

On the other hand, the same article says the jobs with the fastest growth rates include paralegal, physical therapist, systems analyst and computer programmer positions.

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A good point of computer literacy is that the skills learned on one job can often be transferred to another job in a totally different and sometimes more lucrative field, says an article from the October issue of *Woman's Day* magazine.

Other trends prevalent in the American business world include an increase in the number of older people in the workforce and the movement of more women into the labor force. Women in the work place represent a trend that has been slowly developing for several decades, continues *USA Today*.

Regardless of your age or sex, you need to know what's expected of you for the new job.

Employers are looking for people who are eager to work and work hard, and for those who have the desire for success, says the July issue of *Forbes* magazine. Instead of seeing their employees as just laborers, employers are now aware that their people are educated professionals who carry their most important work tools in their heads. Since people are no longer just laborers, says *Forbes*, they have greater job mobility because they can't be separated from their vocation.