

Tuesday • July 22, 1997

Get a haircut and get a real job

Graduating seniors head to the career center as they prepare to face 'the real world'

By RHONDA REINHART
 THE BATTALION

Job hunting is a task many new college graduates may find overwhelming, but the switch from from backpack to briefcase could be easier than expected. Glen Payne, placement director at Texas A&M, said on a national basis, there are more jobs than students. "The market is certainly in the student's favor right now," he said. Students can find help in their job searches at the career center, a centralized placement office on campus.

One service the career center provides is allowing students to set up on-campus interviews with prospective employers.

Each student who wants to interview on campus should complete a disk résumé and turn it in to the career center. The career center has a list of requirements from all the companies registered there. Résumés that fit a company's requirements are sent electronically to the company. The company then pre-selects which students it would like to interview.

Payne said September, October and November are months when on-campus interviewing is intensive.

"Students can generate interviews by sending out résumés directly or by using our system," he said. "But we're a nice, convenient way to do it. Last year, we did 26,000 interviews."

Charlie Davis, an industrial distribution major who graduated in May, said he got a job at Sepco Industries in Houston through an interview he had at the career center.

"I only did one interview that wasn't through the career center," he said. "The career center makes it so easy for you."

Davis said the earlier students start interviewing, the better.

"You need to start interviewing at least a semester before you graduate just to get a feel of what companies are looking for," he said. "You should also research the companies you will be interviewing with. The career center has information on almost every company that comes there."

Davis said the most difficult part of his job search was finding a company that would offer him the best opportunity.

Payne said the idea of job hunting is a bit daunting to most students.

"Getting started is usually the hardest part," he said. "Students start out slow and then start to feel more confident. If students involve themselves at the career center, they get more structure in their job hunting. They don't put it off."

Payne said there are not many schools with an establishment like A&M's career center.

"More opportunities are brought here than any other school with a centralized placement office," he said. "Most companies say they find a stronger work ethic here than at other universities. I constantly hear that companies find intelligent young people here. I also hear about the 'other education' — students getting involved in activities outside of class."

Payne said his formula for a student's success includes doing well in school and getting involved in one or two organizations on campus.

Mary K.D. McKinney, a recruiter for Hewitt Associates, an international consulting firm registered at the career center, said past experience at A&M has been positive.

"A&M is one of the top schools," she said. "We find the students here bright, articulate and well-prepared for interviews."

McKinney said Hewitt brings back about 66 percent of the students it interviews, and about 66 percent of those students get job offers.

The career center presents workshops throughout the semester on such topics as résumé-building and salary negotiation. It also holds mock interviews to help students prepare for the real thing.

"There is very much a practice effect in interviewing," Payne said. "You get good at it. I see interviewing as an active sport. It's not a passive thing. Be ready to talk."

Davis said the most important asset a student can have during an interview is good communication skills.

"A high grade point average alone won't get you a job," he said. "Generally, companies want to see someone with a high energy level, someone who is teamwork-oriented who could be a leader. The more interested you sound in a job, the better chance you have. Market yourself."

Payne said he encourages students to have curiosity, to get out and see what jobs are available.

"Your role is to keep presenting yourself," he said. "I've seen some of the strangest students get hired. For everyone, there is some employer who is going to love you."



Student bodies need not live up to society's standards of beauty

I was sitting in class a couple of days ago, listening in on a discussion between some girls sitting in front of me. The subject was one that has been argued for many years and will probably be argued for many years to come.

The subject was, as one girl put it, society's complete and total obsession with appearances.

The group of girls in front of me was complaining about how much they hated wearing makeup, especially during the summer. They were also complaining about having to lose weight for swimsuit season and getting a tan and having to spend money to get all of the new summer clothes.

This went on for a while, until a guy in front of them chimed in and innocently remarked, "I think girls should just look more natural. You know, like Elle MacPherson or Cindy Crawford."

Dead silence. I wondered if this guy even knew what he had just talked into. He had single handedly opened up an enormous can of worms, and he just sat there, waiting for a response.

Run, I wanted to scream at him, run like the wind. But it was too late; the damage was done.



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"Elle MacPherson?" said one girl, incredulously. "Are you kidding me? Do you even know how many pounds of makeup she wears to get that 'natural look'?"

"Cindy Crawford wears even more," said another. "And the only reason she looks so good is because she can afford to hire a chef and a trainer."

This went on and on, while the guy who made the comment looked like he wanted the earth to open up and swallow him whole.

As I listened, I started to wonder where all of this hostility was coming from. Then it occurred to me — it was the media's fault.

(A note — when in doubt, always blame television or Hollywood. They are easy targets and are usually at the heart of all of society's problems.)

When you look at it, the media really do give the public images to live up to that are almost impossible. Models are tall and stick-thin, with hardly any body fat. Many movie stars are incredibly skinny, too. And these images invade our lives on a daily basis through TV, movies, magazines and newspapers.

Many magazines will try to defend their publications

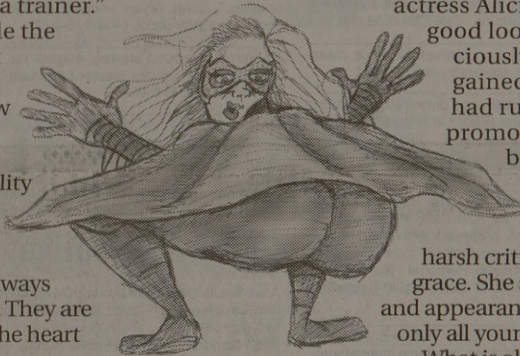
by running stories about the horrors of anorexia nervosa or bulimia, and how the media is helping to promote these problems. How ironic is it when these same magazines turn around and contradict their own stories?

A recent example of this irony centered around actress Alicia Silverstone. Known for her good looks and pretty figure, she was viciously attacked by the press after she gained weight. Many magazines that had run stories on how Hollywood was promoting images that were impossible to attain, also ran stories calling Silverstone "Fatgirl" and "Batbutt."

Silverstone handled all of this harsh criticism with amazing dignity and grace. She said she was happy with her weight and appearance, and that was all that mattered. If only all young women had her confidence.

What is also ironic is that Silverstone's weight gain would not have been noticed if she had not been a movie star. But she is in the limelight, so she is an open target to be judged and criticized by the media.

But the rest of us aren't open targets. We don't have to succumb to the pressures of society and the media. So wear what you want to, eat what you want to, and just be happy with the way you look. That's all that really matters anyway.



GRAPHICS: Brad Graeber

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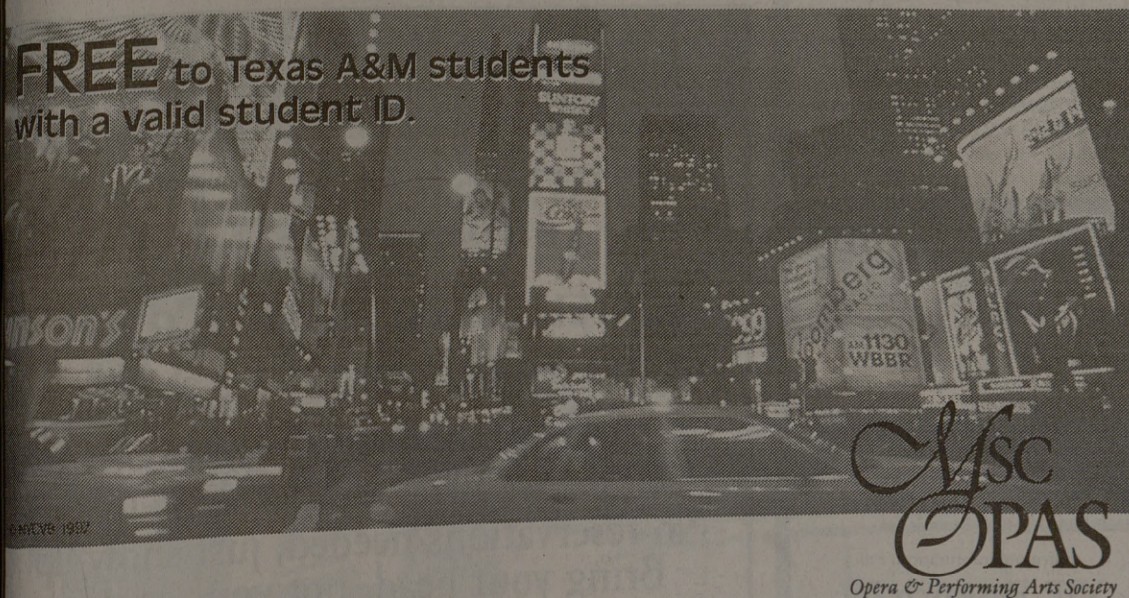
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