

Working that 9 to 5

December grads begin the hunt for employment

By Denise Schoppe
THE BATTALION

When David Belew graduated in December, he was not prepared for a bleak job market.

"I have two jobs that pay minimum wage and I'm looking for a third," Belew said. "It's not what I expected it to be like after graduating from Texas A&M."

In December 2002, 3,891 degrees were awarded to Texas A&M students.

However, many have difficulty entering the work-force.

Belew graduated with a degree in journalism and said finding an adequate paying position has been difficult.

"I started (looking) in October, and I'm still looking," he said. "I'm at two TV stations working 32 hours a week. It's experience that I need, and it will help in the future. Hopefully it all pays off."

While many companies recruit in the spring, Belew said graduating in December rather than May does not make a noticeable difference when searching for employment.

"In December, the holidays and offices are closed, but in May you have more graduates to compete with," Belew said. "My twin brother graduated in August and is still looking. I guess patience is a virtue."

While he keeps a busy work schedule, Belew said being out of school has given him a new perspective.

"It's nice to not have to worry about homework and tests, but now it's all about working, paying bills and surviving," he said.

Anna Benavides, also a December graduate, said she has had to adjust to the working world and has searched extensively for employment since graduation.

"During the graduation ceremony, I felt a lot of anxiety, because I didn't have a job lined up," she said. "I don't think that feeling has gone away exactly."

Benavides said she regrets losing touch with potential employers.

"I wish I would have kept in contact with all my past internship supervisors and co-workers. I could have perfected my networking skills and refined my interviewing skills," Benavides said.

Not all graduates are without a job. Eric Webb, also a December graduate, is employed as a web programmer for The Association of Former Students. Webb said there are many things future graduates should remember when looking for a job.

"Don't ever give up," he said. "Look everywhere. Exhaust all resources and work part-time somewhere, if need be, to establish a rapport."

The Texas A&M Career Center Web site, career fairs and mock interviews are among some resources available to future graduates.

Webb, who registered with the Career Center during his last semester, said he regrets not taking advantage of the resource sooner.

"The problem with (registering late) was the fact that I had missed out on a lot of potential interviews," he said. "This was disheartening, but I knew I had some other events coming up."

One of the events Webb participated in was a mock interview with the business department.

"They brought in actual recruiters from large companies to interview us. This was very beneficial to me," Webb said. "It gave me the opportunity to see what I needed to work on to better sell myself in interviews."

Webb was active in the Business Student Council and acted as web master for the Business Career Fair. From that experience he said he received several interviews, though none of the jobs suited him.

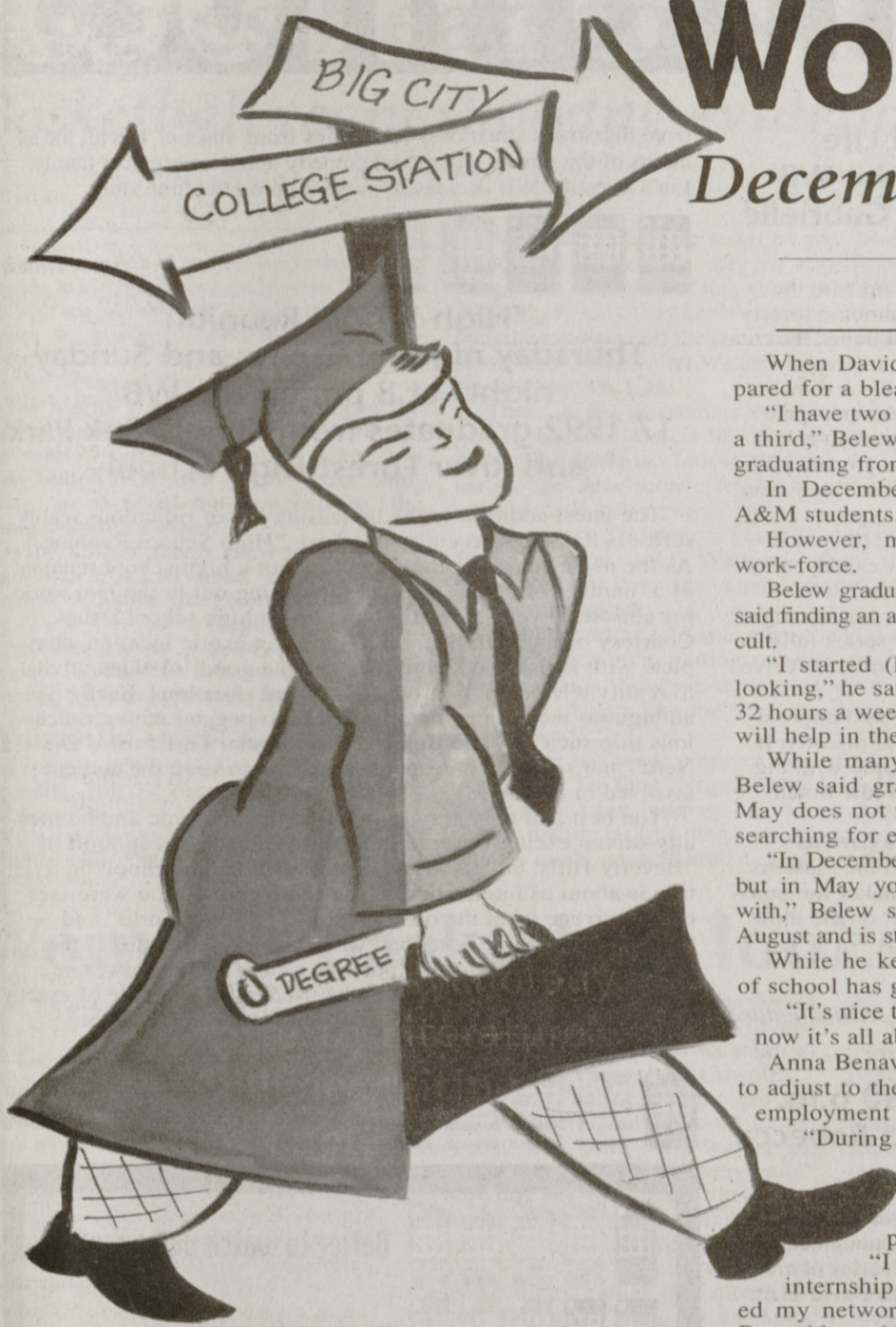
"I started to feel disheartened around Halloween, and I contacted one of my old professors, and set up a meeting with him to discuss my future and my situation," Webb said. "He immediately began calling some of his friends who knew of job openings in College Station."

From this contact, Webb landed an interview with The Association of Former Students. After two interviews, he was offered a position as Web programmer for the organization.

"I don't think I could have found a better place to work at," Webb said. "The people are great and I get to deal with Old A&S all day long. It's really neat to hear some of their stories."

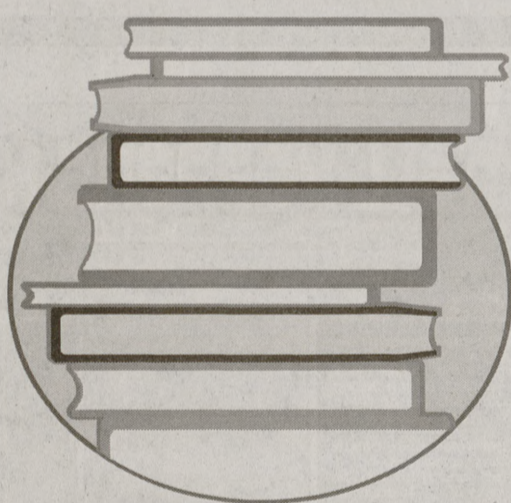
Webb said the change from full-time student to full-time worker has been a welcome adjustment.

"Not having to worry about school, tests or anything like that is nice," Webb said. "Going home at 5 p.m. or later and not having anything to do is also a nice feeling."



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