

From former student Stith Keiser, current owner of myveterinarycareer.com:

Whether you're reading the Wall Street Journal or watching CNN, you've no doubt been inundated with news declaring today's job market the worst since the Great Depression. To earn a job in today's market (or in the next several years), new graduates must realize that it is a buyer's market; employers can afford to be picky.

The *Resume Pointers* sheet offers advice on how to put your best foot-forward with your resume, but an outstanding resume is only part of it. The process of getting a job should not begin a month or two before graduation. Instead, new graduates that find themselves at the head of the pack upon graduation begin planning for their first job several years before hand.

To earn a job, candidates need to possess:

- A skill set
- Experience demonstrating that skill set
- "Results-Oriented" work/internship experience
- Professional references and network

You can't afford to wait until a month before you graduate to begin compiling the above, because they take months, if not years, to build. If you're at a stage in your education where you are unsure of what type of career you want to pursue, utilize Hope's Career Center to research the pros and cons of the careers you are considering. Speak with alumni, family or friends that work in the field (s) you're considering in order to learn more about what their career entails on a day-to-day basis and what they think about the job market. This exercise also allows you to begin building your professional network. Over half of jobs filled are filled through personal connections; having a network is invaluable.

Upon narrowing down the career (s) you want to learn more about, begin immersing yourself in it through electives at school and through internships. One of the most common mistakes new graduates make is thinking that course work alone will make them appealing to employers. Course work is very important in preparing yourself for a career, but a marketing, business or economics degree in of itself does nothing more than match your credentials to those of the majority of students at colleges across the country. To differentiate yourself from your competition, it is imperative that you take the theories and formulas learned in the classroom and apply them in a real-world setting. Internships are a great means to achieve that end.

When at Hope, I had the opportunity, through DEMA, to participate in a handful of internships and independent study opportunities that allowed me to go to employers and lay out a list of my skills and then back those claims up with results-oriented experiences and achievements. For example, taking a marketing class teaches you procedures and theory behind marketing. An internship allows you to take what you learn in the classroom, apply it to a real business, and demonstrate your ability to turn theory or processes into results that impact a business' bottom line.

I still remember a class with Professor VanderVeen where we established that to a business, profits are like breathing (and businesses and people don't live to breath). As a potential employee, it is important to remember that while business may have many goals and values, none can exist if the business doesn't stay in business. Utilize your time at Hope to begin compiling the coursework and experiences you'll need to convince an employer that you can be a productive asset to their organization.