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Advice from the Real World: Recent graduates send back nuggets of post-Colby wisdom

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Advice from



the

Real World

Recent graduates send back nuggets of post-Colby wisdom

This isn't your father talking. Or your mother. Or your uncle, who put in his two cents over spring break. This is advice from alumni who very recently left Mayflower Hill to begin Life After Colby. When *they* tell you to do internships, you'd better listen.

It began with this: If recent graduates could send advice back to students, what would they say? What lessons have they learned outside what some call "The Colby Bubble?"

We shot out an e-mail asking just that, and within minutes the replies began pouring in. Here is a sampling of suggestions on subjects ranging from punctuality (recommended) to the Peace Corps (always an option) to parents as an oasis ("generally a wonderful resource"). And students aren't the only ones who might be surprised by what they read here and online at www.colby.edu/mag, where there's even more.

Illustrations by A.J. Garces

Genius may count in school, but in the real world, the ingredients for success are hard work, perseverance, and integrity. Of course, genius never hurts, but the working world requires discipline and stamina.

Yvonne Siu '03
*Center for Global Development
Washington, D.C.*

Get used to a time schedule. Work is not so liberal as the college schedule.

Greg Lynch '04
*Assistant director of residential life
Colby College*



I recommend that people take grad-school admissions tests while they're still at Colby. Studying while you are still in the habit of being a student, I think, is extremely beneficial to your scores. Additionally, most scores are good for 3-4 years.

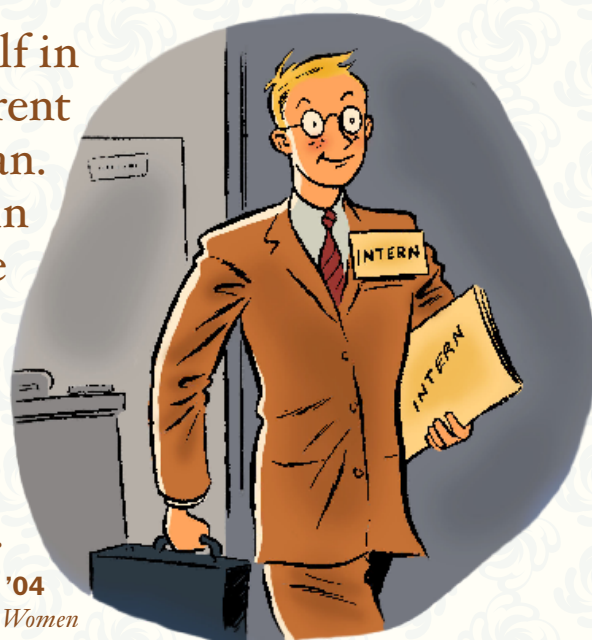
Justin Hedge '03
*Law student
Catholic University
Washington, D.C.*

First, as much as I loved Colby, I had no idea how great and unique it was when I was there. In the real world, I think you realize that your grades are not as important as how well you can think and analyze, and that a lot of jobs don't even care about your transcripts but whether or not you completed interesting course work, did a thesis, or had a great relationship with a professor.

Catherine Benson '02
*Graduate student
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.*

Involve yourself in as many different internships as you can. Make and sustain relationships while at your internships because these relationships can help you get a job after graduation.

Megan Williams '04
*Executive director, Hardy Girls Healthy Women
Waterville, Maine*



No one really ever impressed upon me the importance of an internship; I really thought it was optional, and that after graduating I would simply get an "entry-level" job. Apparently, however, entry-level positions no longer exist, and even administrative positions require 1-2 years of experience. I am looking in the international relations field, specifically international conflict resolution, and have probably applied to about 25-30 jobs, all with tailored resumés and cover letters, only received a call for an interview from one, and at that interview was told my background seemed "too intellectual." How a person can be too intellectual to work at a think tank, I will never know. . . . I will probably wind up fulfilling a cliché and continuing on to graduate school, although, ironically, most graduate schools also require work experience.

Elizabeth Brown '05
Woodbury, N.Y.

Internships are extremely important for any publishing field. I am the internship coordinator for our department and, even when looking for interns, prior experience helps enormously. . . . I also think an impeccable resumé is extremely important, sometimes more so than a cover letter. Cover letters show your personality and interests, but a resumé represents your professional life. And I don't just mean what's written on the resumé. I also mean typos, structure—it should be very easy to read through.

Danielle O'Steen '03
*Assistant editor
Art & Auction magazine
New York, N.Y.*

Every grad should know that, unless you're going on to grad school, the first year out of college is one of the toughest you'll face. Someone told me at my graduation party that it's the hardest of your life. I'm not sure it made it easier, but when things were challenging, at least I knew it was normal. Why is it so hard? It's something to do with having no structure and having infinite choice when you've spent the previous 18 years in an academic structure with many fewer choices.

Kimberly Schneider '01
*Master's degree candidate, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.*

A job is just a job. You are coming in as an entry level and you need to know and expect that. Make sure you are choosing your job for the right reason. While money is fun to spend, if you are working so much you have no time to spend it, what is the point? Also, location, location, location! I relocated to Colorado, where I knew no one. While it was a great experience, eventually you have to make sure you like the city you are living in. . . . Trust me. If not, a month can feel like a year.

Jessica Rosenbloom '02

M.B.A. student, Ross School of Business/University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Move to the place you want, then worry about finding a job. . . . Temp work can buy you time to really look for a meaningful job once you're settled in a new city/place.

Emily Goodyear '05

Publications writer, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Brookline, Mass.



I actually came to New York to be in publishing and so my advice comes from my struggle to break into that industry. First, DO INTERNSHIPS. And do them while you are IN COLLEGE. I finally decided to do an internship for Jan Plan as a senior and it just wasn't enough. . . . You gain work experience and, most importantly, you get contacts.

One more thing. If you decide not to do some sort of program I would suggest going STRAIGHT HOME. Your parents, regardless of how you may feel about them, are generally a wonderful resource.

Casey McCarthy '05

Production Assistant/Archivist Davasee, Enterprises/Jeff Rosen, New York, N.Y.

Anybody is lucky to get a job right out of college. I wouldn't put too much pressure on yourself to get the job you really want. The working life goes by really quickly and you'll soon have an opportunity to apply for another job. As long as you learn something at your first job, it will help. I was putting a lot of pressure on myself to find work I would love. It's not as easy as it sounds. . . . Really search your head for all the skills you've learned along the way. Exhibit a willingness to learn. Don't counter the company culture, try to learn things their way.

Jared Berezin '04

*Marketing Specialist
International Data Corporation
Brighton, Mass.*

Be flexible and don't rush your life. I strongly urge any student to take some time (a year at least) before entering any graduate or medical program to get their life and thoughts in order. In science, most researchers are looking for students with experiences beyond their liberal arts education. Many other professional sectors are moving in this direction. . . . If after exploring a bit (through internships, shadowing, or work) you find your previous goal of being a world-class surgeon or economist isn't what it's cracked up to be, embrace the change of heart and move in another direction.

Jennifer Bishop '02

*Ph.D. candidate
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.*

I wish that I knew (or I knew because my professors in the Spanish Department told me, but I wish I had listened) that the Peace Corps is a great option, that grad school right after Colby is not always the best choice, that doing something different (i.e. some job abroad in which you break even, etc.) is not a bad idea. To apply for a Fulbright, Rotary, or Watson is not as scary as it seems. To apply for the U.S. Department of Education fellowships for grad school before going is a SMART idea.

Michelle Farrell '01

*Doctoral candidate and instructor
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.*

Stay in school!
It is very difficult to find a job that allows midday naps!

Amelia Confalone '04

*Associate Real Estate Consultant
McCall & Almy, Lynnfield, Mass.*



Take down those incriminating Friendster (or others like it) photos and quotes. Or better yet, don't put them up in the first place. Employers and admissions committees Google now. Heaven forbid you should ever want to apply for some sort of security clearance. . . .

Craigslist is a gold mine for slightly or heavily used furniture, as well as slightly musty basement apartments or lofts. You'll need these things, and you'll need them cheaply. . . .

Work part time in grad school. It keeps you busy, expands your circle of acquaintances for networking (or perhaps friends for socializing), and helps to pay the bills, lowering your debt load later.

Mason Smith '04

*Information systems intern/International Franchise Association
Graduate student in computer science
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.*

The harder you work, the luckier you get. Everyone should be aware of this rule of life and put it to the test for themselves to see what opportunities open up for them.

Matthew Koontz '02

*Assistant account manager
Arnold Worldwide
[Advertising] Agency
Boston, Mass.*

Now that I'm working 50-60 hour weeks, I appreciate so much the lifestyle and schedule that the Hill allows you to have. You have much to do, sure, but you have a great deal of freedom in how and when you do it. I wished someone had let me know to soak up and appreciate the kind of life one can lead at Colby.

Nat Chamberlin '03

*Director of annual giving
Noble and Greenough School, Dedham, Mass.*

I always said that I would NEVER have a job that required me to work crazy hours. Once I found a job that I loved, though, I realized that when you like what you're doing you don't notice the hours. A good employer can trick you into thinking that working full-time plus nights and weekends is fun! I also learned that enjoying the company of your colleagues goes a long way.

Annie Hall '03

*Assistant director of admissions, Babson College
Somerville, Mass.*

When Career Services says that your alumni network and alumni directory are the most powerful engine to do a SUCCESSFUL job search, believe them. They're RIGHT. After four months of a very unsuccessful job search in the San Diego area, I finally found a job through one of the handful of Colby alumni who live in this area. It is really hard to just send a resumé and a cover letter and actually land a job without any personal connection.

Ivan Mihajlov '05

*Staff research associate, University of California at San Diego
Immunology Lab-School of Medicine*

Most important piece of information: it doesn't matter what your major is, just make sure they know you went to Colby.

Michael Kershaw '05

*Sales assistant
Guardian Investor Services LLC
Brockton, Mass.*

Need More Advice?

Colby alumni supplied plenty. Go to www.colby.edu/mag/advice and read about following your passions, turning snowboarding into a career, what it's like to be a *Real World* cameraman, and that the best things in post-Colby life aren't free.