

CAREER PLACEMENT AT A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY

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As Ricks College transforms into Brigham Young University–Idaho, there will be many challenges and changes. One of the biggest challenges will be the placement of the baccalaureate graduates. In a study quoted by the president of Westminster College in Salt Lake City, the greatest concern of parents of new freshmen entering college is, “Will my child be able to find a career and support himself or herself after graduation?”

Many of the two-year degrees from Ricks were and will continue to be very marketable as career choices. But most of the two-year career program graduates from Ricks College started their careers with a sharp focus toward completing a four-year degree part-time while working full-time. A four-year degree brings with it a much greater sense of completion and a feeling of urgency to begin a career.

The most significant changes to Career Placement include the following:

- Greatly increased numbers of Internships.
- Greatly increased numbers of students needing Career Placement.
- Teacher Placement and Letters of Recommendation.
- Graduate School Recruitment.
- Alumni (Re)Placement Assistance.

INTERNSHIPS & PLACEMENT

Internships are a key part of helping students prepare for career placement. Not only does the internship help students gain experience and get a foot in the door but also, as a study at one college found, it teaches students how to do the job search. While visiting with BYU-Provo Career Services, I was asked the best method to increase placement rates. I replied that, based on my sixteen years of career placement experience, the best way to increase placement was to simply increase internships.

Conversely, placement helps increase internships. BYU-Provo found that only one to three companies visit the campus solely to recruit interns. But as many as 900 companies come to the campus to recruit students for full-time careers. Of these 900 companies as many as 300 will allow students to interview for internship positions. Simply stated, at BYU-Provo only three companies recruit interns alone, while 900 companies recruit graduates and 300 of these companies allow some internship candidates on their schedules.

Internships are a means to an end, not the end in themselves. An internship prepares a student for career employment. If a student completes an internship and is unable to find career employment after graduation,

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then the internship is of little value—similar to a young man completing a Duty to God Award or a young woman completing a Young Woman of Service Recognition Award and failing to use this preparatory step to accomplish the higher goal of receiving temple ordinances.

TEACHER PLACEMENT AND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

The greatest number of graduates at BYU-Idaho will probably come from the College of Education. In December 2002 there will be approximately 50 graduates, and in April 2003 more than 200 students will graduate from the College of Education. Students graduating in Education will have a teacher credential file. Each of these files will hold five to eight letters of recommendation. Most of these letters will come from the BYU-Idaho faculty.

A study at BYU-Provo found that only two percent of nonteaching jobs required credential files. Therefore, the Career Placement Office will *not* keep credential files for nonteaching graduates. Instead, most companies will require that students provide references whom the company can write or call. Faculty are considered the best reference source.

Also, as students apply to graduate schools, they will be required to have letters of recommendation from faculty who know their academic ability. Because of teacher credential files, reference letters for employers, and applications for graduate schools, there will be a marked increase in the number of letters of recommendation that BYU-Idaho faculty will write for graduating students.

GRADUATE SCHOOL RECRUITMENT

In the past, four-year universities recruited at Ricks College for students to transfer to their schools and finish a bachelor's degree. As a four-year university BYU-Idaho will have graduate schools recruiting students into their various graduate programs. This will be a much more selective process, and the input of the BYU-Idaho faculty will often be requested. As mentioned earlier, most of the graduate schools will require letters of recommendation from faculty.

ALUMNI (RE)PLACEMENT

Alumni are a rich source of seasoned talent for many companies. Universities also find a greater attachment to alumni if the university continues to help with career choices and changes. Most alumni find a greater *career* tie to a four-year university than to a two-year college, so there will be a much greater demand for alumni services at BYU-Idaho. The link between the Career Placement Office and the Alumni and Development Office will become stronger.

CONCLUSION

As the “Marketing Department,” the Career Placement Office will shoulder the major responsibility for promotion and sales of the BYU-Idaho product—our baccalaureate graduates. We will inform, encourage, and coordinate the efforts of those involved: graduates, employers, faculty. Placement will become an increasingly important part of our university’s work. ☺