

“Got ISAN?!”

My First Job will be.....?

I know you are wondering – “Isn’t it too early for me to be thinking about my first job? I’m only a freshman / I’m a senior I have IS to deal with”. The truth is it is never too early to be thinking about this. Your first job is your maiden foray into the professional world and many times defines the course of your career. So the longer you spend evaluating your interests and options and what you really want to be doing with your life, the better prepared you will be when you make that leap.

If you are freshman or sophomore you probably want to spend your time doing a lot of research into different career paths and companies. Internships are a great way for you to sample a career choice and also gain on the job experience. Another great way to learn about a particular profession is by talking to people who work in the industry or company you are interested in. Alumni and family friends are a great resource when it comes to giving you an insider’s view about a particular career. Networking like this ahead of time, also helps you when you go out to find an internship or a job. In fact building and maintaining a network of personal and professional contacts is a vital skill for career progression no matter what stage you are at. Career Services has numerous resources to help you structure your exploration of yourself and plan your career development.

While your academics will help you gain the subject knowledge you need, it is extracurricular activities that really help you develop your leadership, teamwork, management and organization skills. Both employers and graduate schools carefully scrutinize your extracurricular achievements to draw conclusions about your abilities viz-a-viz these skills. Moreover, actively contributing in extracurricular activities gives you the confidence to deal with a diversity of people, situations and problems. Volunteering at a local food bank or working together as a team to organize the Kwanza dinner or mentoring someone, are experiences that are not only rewarding in an altruistic sense but also help you learn more about yourself. So make sure you actively contribute, in one of the many extracurricular activities the college offers. They are as much a part of your personal growth as your academics.

For those of you who are juniors and seniors, well simply put, it is time to move into top gear. Hopefully you have done some of the above already. If you have not, look at your TODO list and prioritize appropriately so that you do get to some of it. On the top of that list should be NETWORKING and working on your RESUME. Career services can help you get started on both these fronts. ISAN (International Student Alumni Network) has numerous ways for you to get in touch with alumni and also seek advice on your resume, such as, ISAN on LinkedIn, the alumni mentorship program or contacting someone on the ISAN leadership team to help you find an alumni contact.

Students can also get lists of alumni working in a particular field or who had the same major, from the Career Services office. It is imperative that you are proactive in trying to seek out advice and also doing your research. It is a very competitive world out there for internships, jobs and getting into the top graduate schools and doing your homework thoroughly and early is the only way to get a leg up on the competition. So

really take advantage of the resources you have, NOW rather than later. While all this seems like a lot, with a little planning it is all possible. I asked alumni the following questions regarding their “first-job” search and here is what they had to say:

1) When did you begin job searching?

I started about six months before the end of my final semester at Wooster. It was very difficult since it took me almost all of summer to find something that I liked but my limitation was the location since I wanted to stay in Ohio. (Mark Ghosh’99, Technical Manager)

I was a summer graduate, so I began in January of my senior year, way too late. The ideal time to start would be August of your senior year. (Desislava Dimitrova, ’05, R&D Analyst, Insurance)

I started at the beginning of the fall semester of my senior year. (Sandeep Bhatia’85, Consulting)

2) What steps did you take as part of your job search? In what way did a member or office of the college help you land your first interview or/job?

Went to a career fair, obtained contact information of alumni and got in touch with them, forwarded my resume to people I knew and companies I was interested in.(Desislava Dimitrova, ’05, R&D Analyst, Insurance)

Spent a lot of time in the Career Office researching companies and opportunities. Contacted alumni and that led to interviews. A business professor connected me to my first employer and helped me get the all important interview. (Sandeep Bhatia’85, Consulting)

3) How many interviews did you go to?

I went to a total of seven interviews all over the country but decided on that last one because it just felt right and everything fell into place. (Mark Ghosh’99, Technical Manager)

I had 3 on the phone, but went to one on-site interview event in March. Discontinued any interview process if I found out a company does not offer an H1 visa.(Desislava Dimitrova, ’05, R&D Analyst, Insurance)

I went to about 3-4 interviews before landing my first job; 2 weeks after graduation. (Sonia Vaidya’ 00 , Advertising)

I interviewed with 4 companies of which three came back with offers. However, only one showed potential for an H1-B work visa. I am still working for Intersoft Corporation, a IT solutions company. (Deval Mehta’05, Technology)

4) How did you land these interviews?

1. An alum contact, 2. Career Fair, 3. Posted resumes on-line (listed in order of usefulness--in fact 3, if not combined with 1 and 2 is a waste of time in my experience). (Desislava Dimitrova, '05, R&D Analyst, Insurance)

I finally landed my first and only interview through a high school friend who was interning with Eclipsys Corporation, where I still work today. (Nikita Sharma, '01, Software Developer)

I got my first job through a family connection. The husband of my mother's friend was a regional sales director with UPS. He introduced me to some executives at UPS and I arranged for an interview. The rest is history. This was in Hong Kong in 1994. A few years later, I transferred to another company and this lead also came from a family friend. (Tim Smith '94, Program Assistant, World Bank)

5) What advice would you give to current Wooster junior or senior?

If you need finances to keep you afloat for a few months after graduation, I would start saving NOW. Mark Ghosh '99, Technical Manager)

Start looking for internships in your sophomore year. Ideally, try to do one or two internships as these will either lead to job offers or at least provide you will a starting network. Establish a very profound idea of what specifically you want to do within a given company, which precise department you are looking at, which exact position and why (it does not make a good impression to call an alum or go to an interview and say that you want to "work with numbers" or "help people"). Get in touch with a lot of alumni--most companies want their employees to refer applicants, but also be aware that an alum would not risk his or her reputation unless they are sure you will make a superb impression (which is why they will be glad to take calls from you to answer questions and give tips as you prepare for the interview). In the way you present yourself, be as specific as possible, give detailed examples of things you did to achieve results (i.e. avoid description of duties). If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, do not say so. Start thinking out loud. Getting a glimpse of your thinking process in a difficult situation is one of the most valuable things an interviewer/employer wants to see. (Desislava Dimitrova, '05, R&D Analyst, Insurance)

My advice would be to let all friends and family members know that you are in the market and use their networks. Talk to professors, school administrators, church members, teammates, etc. A personal connection will differentiate you from the crowd. International students should focus on their international experience and languages spoken. Almost all businesses today have some kind of global component and need people who speak other languages and understand other cultures. Businesses are looking for smart, motivated, hardworking people with good interpersonal skills. (Tim Smith '94, Program Assistant, World Bank)

By

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To learn more or join ISAN go to www.wooster.edu/alumni/isan

To join ISAN on LinkedIn go to <http://alumni.wooster.edu/isan/linkedin/join.php>

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