

Questions and Answers from OPCD P'21 Session 9/29

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- **Q: What looks better to a recruiter down the line, 1) getting ANY job or internship post-graduation or 2) holding out for the right/relevant job and thereby having potential empty space on the resume?**

A: Holding out for the “right” job is dependent on many factors and differs for each student. In general, it’s easier to get a job when you have one than if you don’t have one. However, you have to have a plan so that your first job does not end up being something that you don’t want to do for a long time. Having a plan will help you to pivot to a better job later. The issue with holding out is that the longer you go without a job, recruiters wonder what you have been doing for that long period of time. If it goes for too long, you’ll need to be ready to compete against students who are just a year behind you.

- **Q: How will graduates find jobs in a market that is decreasing in size, remote, or no longer hiring?**

A: No matter the economy, there will always be jobs for people who are willing to do two things - (1) Be willing to look for and accept a job to gain experience and skills that will one day lead to a dream job, (2) Build your networking capabilities and connections and (3) Acquire skills that are in high demand. Companies always want to hire people who have: a) billable skills (e.g. software development, technical credentials/certificates) and b) revenue producing skills (e.g. sales and fundraising). For growing companies in most any industry, the entry roles that are typically in demand are: a) Serving and supporting customers (consulting, customer success, customer or technical support/services), b) Analytics roles that support sales and marketing, and c) Recruiting coordinator roles to identify, screen, interview and onboard potential employees.

- Q: My senior is looking for a career in the arts. She was initially interested in working at a museum, most of which are not hiring. It seems like a particularly difficult time to enter this field. **Are there services at Wake to help students find jobs related to the Arts?**

A: Arts-related job opportunities are most often secured through networking. We have many alumni who have gone on to careers in the Arts and we can help a student get connected to them. One method that we have seen work is for a student to volunteer to get experience and connections in the arts world - and to also secure a “platform job” that will pay the bills even though this job may have nothing to do with the Art industry. Use much of your non-working time to network in the arts world as much as possible. This is often the approach to work in the most high-demand, popular industries like sports, fashion, entertainment, etc. There are a ton of people who want these jobs and these organizations don’t need to try very hard to recruit students; very few conduct traditional on campus recruiting. Candidates who are willing to network and are willing to do sometimes very menial, low paid roles typically end up getting the jobs.

- Q: Our senior is taking the LSAT in October and plans to work for a few years and then apply to law school. **Given the compromised job market due to Covid, is it recommended that my senior consider applying to law school now or should he do it in a year or two?**

A: It depends what type of law he or she wants to practice. In general, working in the sector (e.g. as a paralegal or doing legal research or in a legal clinic) for a couple of years would be beneficial. Also, during recessions, grad school applications typically increase, so it may be harder to get into a school of choice given the increased competition.

- **Q: What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school versus going to work immediately after graduation? Which do you recommend and why?**

A: It depends on the field. Generally, when students have a couple of years of work experience, it will make the grad educational experience more valuable. Sometimes students use grad school as an excuse to avoid (or because they are frustrated) looking for a job. Finding a job takes a lot of time and can be emotionally draining, so many students would prefer to remain in the more known academic environment. When looking at graduate school, a student should seriously evaluate the ROI of the desired degree in the marketplace for a specific school and program. Because there are many options for adult learning today (certificates, credentials, bootcamps and more) and employers' views are rapidly changing about the educational requirements for who they recruit, graduate school is not always going to be the best option.

- **Q: Given the job market, is it the right time to consider graduate degree programs if your student was thinking about them anyway (perhaps originally after getting some work experience)?** I am thinking specifically of skill-development oriented grad programs, like schools of journalism school, law, film. My daughter is applying ED to Virginia Commonwealth University's Brand Center as her goal is to be a creative person in advertising.

A: Per the answer above, grad school makes sense when the student is clear about the benefits and ROI/value for the specific degree, program and school that they are interested in attending. It's not safe to assume that graduate school is a "golden ticket" to opportunity as job markets differ by career and industry sector, as well as location. It's best to do your homework, be strategic, and be certain about your decision. It can be pretty discouraging if one learns that grad school wasn't a good

decision *after* they are enrolled, paying tuition (and forgoing salary from a paying job), and doing more homework than they had in college.

The VCU Brand Center one is going to be competitive because there are currently few jobs in that space, and I would anticipate a huge application surge for that program. It's a really good program.

- Q: Our senior is focused on the social impact career path having spent the past three summers interning with social justice/global health non-profits and foundations. She is currently gathering target companies for her job search, mostly via personal connections and Google. She has worked a bit with an OPCD career coach and we'd like to understand if there are additional WF resources she should be tapping into.

What kind of support is available for students interested in a social impact job or career?

A: She sounds like she is taking the correct actions. However, organizations in this sector do not consistently post to the traditional college recruiting sites like Handshake and LinkedIn. They may post to idealist.org. Networking and interning is most important to get your foot in the door. She should identify desired locations and organizations and tap in to the Wake Forest alumni network. She may also want to contact the Office of Civic and Community Engagement on the WF campus. They post on-campus and virtual internships as well as volunteer opportunities in non-profits. Also, please ask her to meet with the OPCD career coach, Amy Willard.

- Q: We are interested in hearing how engineering students are being addressed and whether all the turmoil has affected the timeline for the engineering school's accreditation.

A: The engineering students are provided tailored career support given their interests. If they have a complete profile and job search agent in Handshake, specific internship and job opportunities are shared with them regularly, as well as career education and recruiting-related information, activities and events.

Engineering students are fortunate because they are typically qualified for a wide range of entry level roles that are popular among Wake students ranging from finance to consulting to marketing to STEM and analytics. There is an event held each spring called STEM Slam which hosts employers specifically looking for students in the STEM fields.

To our knowledge, the engineering school's accreditation is on schedule as planned.

- **Q: What has been or will be done to maximize the quantity and quality of employers that recruit Wake seniors this year?**

A: We have a dedicated employer relations team of about 10 people who both serve and perform outreach to companies each year. In total, we have more internship and job opportunities available to students so far this Fall than last year at this time, primarily because our team has sourced over 1,000 jobs that we know would be of interest to our students. In addition, we have had more internships posted to our students so far this Fall versus last year at this time. Students are responding by applying to more of these sourced jobs than those that were not sourced. We reach out to alumni and to parents who work at high-interest organizations and ask them to provide job and internship opportunities - and also to be networking contacts for our students.

In the first 5 weeks of this Fall, we have had career events, information sessions, and interview schedules for over 200 finance, consulting, STEM, analytics and larger organizations, many who have recruited Wake Forest students for many years. These firms love recruiting at Wake as indicated by our 74 NPS which is comparable to Ritz-Carlton, Zappos and JetBlue.

The challenge for students in this job market is that the competition is very high. Students are applying to more opportunities and companies have many good choices. To help a student stay motivated and confident, we recommend that they consistently read our emails, meet with a coach or join a job search group, and

dedicate time each week to completing job search action items. Think of this process as a marathon, not a sprint - and try not to compare your experience to your classmates' as every person's experience is different.

- **Q: What do you think is the portion of potential employers that are hosting in-person second interviews (serious candidates)? What industries/types of positions are most likely to require in-person second interviews ?**

A: This is a difficult question to answer because this information is not tracked and every company has a unique process. We do know that almost all interviews are being done virtually. We can see that organizations are still trying to figure out how to recruit and hire most effectively in a COVID world.

- **Q: What type of preparation and skills are more important with the use of more virtual interview modalities ?**

A: It is crucial to allocate sufficient time to be prepared and ready for the interview. Arrive early to get comfortable and not be anxious. Find a location where broadband is the most reliable, there are no visual or audio distractions behind you and around you. Have solid “eye contact” with the camera and bring your most positive energy and enthusiasm to the situation. Elevate the laptop so that the camera is at eye-level and remember to keep hand motions below the camera. Be aware that some interviews are recorded and some may be live. It is dependent on the firm and the # of interviews. In general, interview preparation and practice is something everyone wishes they had done more of *before* their actual interview. A student can practice interviews with a career coach or use our online mock interview software. Interview Stream.

- **Q: My senior has not yet really engaged with the OPCD or taken one of Heidi's classes. What would you recommend as a good first or next step given our graduation timeline?**

A: He should review the READY7 career readiness framework to make sure he's confident and ready to conduct his job search well. Step 1 is to complete his Handshake profile and career interests. If his resume and LinkedIn profile are not updated and professional, he should attend a workshop, get a resume review, and/or work on them using the guidance on the OPCD website. He can participate in employer info sessions to learn about different entry level roles, careers, organizations and industries. He will also need to be able articulate his 30-second pitch to introduce himself to others. A career coach can walk him through these steps if he isn't ready or able to do so on his own.

He can also attend any College to Career course during Spring semester, EDU299 being the most relevant for seniors trying to get it all together before graduation.

- **Q: Who has training programs like an Accenture, EY, KPMG, etc – how do you break into those companies if you are not an accounting major but want to join a large organization? Who is looking for strong writers with some (limited) management experience?**

A: Management/leadership development programs are out there and many firms have these although they may have reduced the number of positions this cycle. For the ones you mentioned, your student with strong writing (and communications) skills should apply to advisory consulting jobs. There are many non-business majors that work for these companies. The interview process is rigorous and competitive so your student will need to be well-prepared and should meet with a coach for guidance.

- **Q: Beyond sending your resume in and attending the information sessions, what else can you do? Obviously use personal connections if you're fortunate to have them but what else can you do to stand out?**

A: Follow up. How a person uniquely follows up can be a differentiator. Be unique and personal. Show that you have done work tracking down an address or remembering what a recruiter said or going the extra mile. Network with Wake Forest alumni through LinkedIn Career Connects Group, Alumni Group, WIN, and CareerShift. Also, closely read info from the recruiter and follow the directions - as many students don't complete this fundamental step.

- **Q: Where are the best opportunities?**

A: The best is different for every person. These are not necessarily the "best" jobs, but currently there are many opportunities available in software development and sales. Others include supply chain/logistics, health care administration, finance, especially in the mortgage industry, and government contractors. Project management certifications and certified teachers are in high demand.

- **Q: Our son did not have the opportunity to obtain work experience or an internship over the summer that would lead to a "career" job after graduation. He has many terrific talents, but does not have a clear focus as to what he would like to pursue using those skills. It is quite overwhelming for him to even know where to start. What advice would you give to those Seniors who do not have a job offer, no prospects of one, and no clear path ahead of them?**

A: What is his/her major? Start there by looking at [historical first-destination survey data of past Wake students](#) as to where they landed to create an initial list to research. Location preference is helpful as many students may know where they want to go, but not what they want to do or for whom. A [Location Quotient](#) enables one to see the % of jobs in a region that are in demand. Also, staffing firms in these

locations are an underutilized tool. Make an appointment as soon as possible with a Career Coach to develop a search strategy using the Ready7 framework. Be persistent, do the work, and opportunities will come.

- **Q: What sectors ARE communicating that they are ready to hire liberal arts majors? And what kinds of relationships does Wake have which companies in said sectors?** Asking this because the recent job fair seemed to be very big corporations.

A: The First Destination Survey from the past 4 years, reveal, non-business major graduates start in these top 7 industries - consulting, healthcare, higher education, internet/software, non-profits, investment/portfolio mgt and marketing. The firms who have hired the most of these students (minus Wake affiliated organizations) are Teach for America, EY, Deloitte, Gartner, GLG, Vanguard, Americorps and NIH). Most of our students secure jobs at smaller employers via networking, Handshake and LinkedIn. A student can learn how to use these channels by reading the materials on the OPCD website, taking a College to Career course, attending a group workshop, or meeting with a career coach.

Regarding career fairs, It is and most likely always will be this way with the career fairs. Smaller firms cannot compete or don't have to commit based on the demand of their organizations.

- **Q: My questions center around having a better understanding of the coordination between OPCD and the business school for career recruitment purposes. Our senior took one of the OPCD module courses that seemed to have some additional complexities associated with the fact that he is in the business school. Are these separate recruitment entities or is there overlap? Are there things that a business school student can do through the OPCD recruitment process to improve one's chances of employment?**

A: There are separate career coaching teams for the college and the business school. Your business school student should have a dedicated career coach who he can ask for support and guidance. There is one employer relations team who serves both the college and business school students. The work between these teams are well-coordinated as they are all overseen by Andy Chan, the Vice President for Innovation and Career Development in partnership with Mercy Eyadiel, Associate Vice President and Chief Corporate Engagement Officer.

- **Q: Do you have suggestions for keeping internship offers open so that you can let other company internship processes play out to see your options before you commit?**

A: This is difficult to do as each company has different deadlines and policies - and each student has varying degrees of negotiating "power". In general, we recommend that a student meet with a career coach for perspective and tailored advice dependent on the student's situation.

- **Q: If a company requires you to respond quickly to an internship offer and you accept, is there an acceptable way to go back and decline the offer if you prefer to accept another later offer that is a better fit?**

A: We do not condone a student reneging on an accepted offer as this will have negative implications for the student, for Wake Forest, and for Wake Forest alumni who work at that organization. A student should meet with their career coach if they have an existing relationship, or with one of our career team executive leaders (Andy Chan, Mercy Eyadiel, Stuart Mease, Heidi Robinson or Michelle Horton), to discuss their personal situation and determine the appropriate course of action.

- **Q: What skills are needed for "consulting" at the just out of college level?** It seems that students might need to have more experience to be a "consultant."

A: Writing, communication, analytical, project management, and professional interpersonal skills are important and mirror the skills of most well-rounded liberal

arts students. Most firms are looking for the best talent that fit their jobs and companies - and do not screen out any majors. In fact, one of the major consulting firms just shared who they were interviewing for their advisory practices and the majority were non-business.

- **Q: Our daughter is an English major with a minor in Global Trade and Commerce. What specific guidance can you give us to make her career search successful?**

A: It's important for her to be [Career Ready](#). She can start crafting a 30-second pitch highlighting who she is and what she wants to do by location, industry, company and function. This is helpful to identify so we can give her directions to her final destination. There are many other steps that a coach can help her to complete and go through the process.

- **Q: Betsy Chapman trained us not to hover over our college students and not to provide them solutions to their problems but instead to be empathetic while letting them figure out how to solve problems on their own. So my question 4 years later is – should we simply encourage them or should we get involved?** After all, we love them but we don't really want them living in the basement after graduation.

A: Continue to encourage them in important ways and with a positive framing. Motivate or incentivize them to review the OPCD or School of Business Market Readiness and Employment websites to get started - and to make an appointment with a career coach. You can “get involved” by offering connections to them that can build their network, knowledge and potential opportunities now and in the future.

It's good to have a conversation with them about your expectations about the terms for living in your basement. That may be enough to get them working on their job search. And if they do need your help or support after graduation, what you expect them to do in order to receive your support. Depending on the year, almost 50% of students (at most every college across the country) are still looking for or deciding

on their post-college job, so they (and you) may need to work together to plan for this. At WF, almost every one of these students will have landed a good job or grad school spot by November. And we will help them every step of the way - they just need to ask us and spend time working on it.

- **Q: What advice do you have for science majors (e.g. Chemistry) who would like to consider an industry job before committing to grad school or medical school?**

A: Participate in campus events and network with science alumni in all types of workplaces. Also, meet with a career coach and attend career education courses and workshops. Many science majors do not get Career Ready with their resume, LinkedIn profile and elevator pitch; they do not apply to as many jobs as other students; and they do not attend as many events. This is a huge missed opportunity as the STEM skillset and mindset is in high demand by employers of all types.

- **Q: For someone interested in going to graduate school in the future but would like to get a research assistant position what tools does your office offer?**

A: Depending on the area of interest, we would have the student meet with the career coach who is aligned with their interest area. The coach would then help the student identify and be prepared to go after the positions that fit their interests.

- **Q: Any advice for science majors who may be interested in pharma?**

A: Pharmaceutical alumni connections are first and foremost. Also, we partner with UNC, Duke and other schools in a STEM career fair that will be online later this fall. Your student should consider this event since many of the Raleigh pharma firms are involved in this one. Also, we have done STEM/healthcare/pharma career treks past years, and are likely to do some virtual ones later in the year with some of our alums. Get the STEM+Analytics Career Pathways newsletter to stay informed about these events and opportunities. The NIH (National Institute of Health) is a significant employer of our students too. Brian Mendenhall is our career coach who

specializes in this area. He can help introduce the student to resources, people and companies who recruit at WF and other types of opportunities. Make an appointment with him via Handshake.

- **Q: What is the outlook for international students and being able to receive a job offer through the OPT?**

A: Sponsorship by employers is a challenge in the current political and economic environment. Students should develop parallel plans that consist of: 1) USA-based employment and where they are authorized to work, AND 2) considering employment based in their home country with companies that do business in the USA, AND 3) USA-companies that do business in their home country. Deep knowledge of OPT is important.

We spend a lot of time and effort helping students navigate this narrow path, so students should meet with a career coach for perspective and support. For instance we had about 12-15 firms at the fair that were open to sponsorship. The more technical majors with few domestic students in those programs are where more firms are willing to sponsor. In the past, we have some of the highest success rates for international students versus some of our peers.

- **Q: My son is an Economics major with a minor in Math, who is interested in working in the Government or with the government. Any particular suggestions?**

A: Check out USAJobs.gov. Apply to many roles and network with WF alumni in the government for advice. They may refer him to others in the department that he's interested in. Given his majors, his skill set would be in demand. Security clearance is a hot transferable skill now. Project management would be good too.

- **Q: The 21 Engineering class is Wake's first set. Is there any special effort to guide them since most employers were not recruiting Engineering grads from Wake before now?**

A: Engineering grads are very employable in a wide range of roles including

consulting, finance, analytics, product management, marketing, sales, technology and others. If the student wants to get into a specific engineering field, s/he must identify the area of engineering they want and show interest via networking, research and projects. General engineering is OK, but employers prefer to see more specifics. We also work closely with the Engineering faculty to identify opportunities based on the curriculum and students' interests.

- **Q: Do you need any particular skills or a particular major to work with political think tanks?**

A: Research, communication - written and verbal. It's important to have really done your homework before and during the networking and interview process. Many majors are possible, not only political science or international relations. You have to demonstrate your interest in the think tank's focus areas so that they can see your genuine interest and enthusiasm, if not passion, for their work.

- **Q: Due to the economy, there aren't as many "programs" hiring. But most all "platform" jobs require a couple years experience, what would you tell students about this debate and how to find other positions?**

A: A "platform job" could be defined as jobs in customer service, logistics, administrative, where one earns an income but may not be the most desired job for the long term. Certainly this is not what most students see as their ideal first job. But if they want to be an actor, work in sports, or a non-profit where the supply of jobs is much smaller than the number of candidates, they may need to work one of those jobs while hustling by volunteering and doing whatever is necessary to break into the industry.

- **Q: Any advice that would be specific to Computer Science majors?**

A: There are a lot of options for CS majors. Their typical challenge is knowing what they are looking for and articulating it and their value clearly. Meet with a career coach to get Career Ready. Then, apply to companies! Master a programming

language - R, Python are very hot now.

- **Q: If you didn't intern at one of the big consulting firms last summer is it possible to break in?**

A: Yes, but it is highly competitive. There are many consulting opportunities, not just with the big firms. And we have many alumni who started in a boutique firm and are now in the big firm. The first questions for a student to consider is “Do I know what a consulting job really is? Does it fit my vision, personality, values and skills? Will I do the work required to be very prepared for the networking and interview process so I can compete with other great candidates from around the world?”

- **Q: Any advice that would be specific to an Econ major with minors in Entrepreneurship and Comm?**

A: Analytics, statistics, R, Python, Tableau, PowerBI proficiency are in demand, and he/she should have been exposed to these buzzwords. SaaS companies would be good for this student as an entrepreneur.

Meeting with a career coach can help the student determine how to best align their education and skills with jobs and roles that fit their interests, and then develop a career action plan to be Career Ready and network and apply to all types of jobs.