

Grads see value of degree

But WSU survey warns of 'overinflating'

More high school students and older adults are beginning to realize the value of a college education, says a Wayne State University official.

John Cruseo, placement services director, based his conclusion on a five-year comparative study of WSU graduates from 1981 to 1985.

The first such survey conducted by Cruseo was needed to look at the students and determine their needs. The survey looked at the types of jobs the graduates took, salaries, job preparation and overall satisfaction.

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— John Cruseo
WSU placement director

kind of professional employment they tended to seek, as well as an ability to accept employment, when necessary, which might be less demanding of their skills or time."

Cruseo said. Individual surveys are conducted each year, and the resulting statistics are used for accreditation visits or self-analysis among the schools and colleges.

This was the first five-year study that gave an overall picture of graduates during the half decade.

THIS COMPARATIVE STUDY gave some insight into the demands of the job market through the salary survey.

For example, the salary increase was lower for industrial engineers. "That was surprising in a manufacturing state like Michigan," Cruseo said.

This may indicate a trend, he said, of employers looking at a manufacturing plant as a whole system. There may be more mechanical and electrical engineers being hired at a higher rate of pay who are designing and analyzing the whole plant.

This may provide a signal for a close look at the industrial engineering curriculum in order to ensure it meets the needs of the market place, Cruseo said.

THE RESULTS held a few surprises, Cruseo said.

The general makeup of the graduates had changed, he found. "There was a tendency for graduates to be both younger and older," Cruseo said. "That means we were attracting both the traditional student, the 18-year-old who goes to school right from high school, and the non-traditional student, adults over 35."

Cruseo said the increase in the older students may be a result of economics. "They may have felt they needed more education after confronting their economic situation," he speculated.

They realized the importance of a college education, and that may be

the reason for the increase in traditional students. "The greater number may be part of the realization among young people that unless one has a college degree, one has less of a chance for significant employment," Cruseo said.

BUT THERE'S a danger of overinflating the value of a college degree. Some students entering WSU may believe that a degree automatically entitles them to a high paying job.

During hard economic times, that is not necessarily true, Cruseo noted. "Many college grads may still have unrealistically high expectations," he said. "When they take a job with long hours and lower pay, they may wonder why they could not

have gotten that job right out of high school and not gone to college."

"But what they fail to realize is employers are hiring college graduates, and those high school graduates are out of luck."

Cruseo said he would like to do more "reality counseling" so there would be less job dissatisfaction among the graduates.

THE SURVEY revealed WSU graduates did better during the 1981-83 recession than the general population of southeastern Michigan. During this period, WSU graduates had an unemployment rate that was 42-53 percent less than the area average.

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