

Grads finding diplomas won't give them warm welcome in job market

BY TIM CAVALLI
SPECIAL WRITER

They have caps. They have gowns. They have diplomas. They don't, however, have many jobs. They're the class of '92. As the recession continues to take its toll on the economy, its effect is costing a long shadow over local campuses, where this year's graduating class is getting a first-hand lesson in the economic principle of supply and demand.

"Overall, recruiting has been down 30 percent for the year," said Robert Thomas, director of placement and career services at Oakland University, Rochester Hills.

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OU usually places 83 to 85 percent of its graduates in jobs in the months surrounding graduation.

"I know it won't be 83 percent at the moment because some students are still looking," Thomas said.

The student hit hardest by the economic slump is "the liberal arts student who does not have a specialty," according to Thomas.

"During a recession," he said, "these students will have trouble finding jobs."

Patrick Scheetz, director of Michigan State University's College Employment Research Institute, said students with vague career objectives suffer in the current job market.

"Employers do not want people who have degrees and say, 'I have this and how do you want to use it?'" Scheetz said. "Employers are looking for people who've worked in the field for which they're applying, who have work experience in addition to the academics."

Thomas noted that, while engineers have suffered from cutbacks in the automotive industry, the demand for nurses and health care specialists has been steady throughout the recession.

The steady demand in the health care field is understandable, Scheetz said.

"Our whole population is growing older and needs more attention," he said.

Oakland Community College has over 90 "career programs" designed to prepare students for specific fields, George Cartsonis, OCC spokesman, said certain programs

yielded more jobs than others this year.

"The hot areas are in the technologies, which will probably continue to be a popular field throughout the '90s. Those fields continue to be areas in which employers seek graduates. The allied health fields are also doing well. The so-called 'soft areas,' not surprisingly, are people taking general education or liberal arts degrees. Business administration does not mean good prospects either," Cartsonis said.

Christine Brant, director of cooperative education and placement at Madonna University, Livonia, said she hadn't noticed a trend in hiring.

"The slump is pretty much across the board," Brant said.

Brant added that she feels marketability should not be a concern among students selecting a major.

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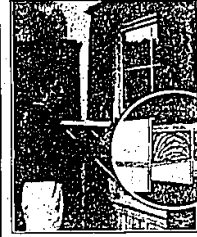
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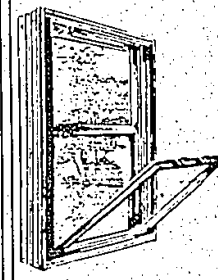
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