

Quest Alumni Newsletter

September, Senior Year

Moving Toward Graduation

As you move into the fast lane for graduation, check to make sure you have all your requirements and enough credits to graduate. Verify that...

- All your grades have been recorded in the registrar's office. Glitches in the system and instructor errors are not uncommon.
- All your credits have been completely totaled. Yes, errors in addition do occur, even with computers.
- Any transfer credits or study-abroad credits have been included.
- You have satisfied degree requirements completely.

All of this is your responsibility, not your advisor's, the registrar's, or your parents'. If there is a problem with your record, the sooner you discover it, the easier it will be to resolve.

Getting Your Ducks in a Row

By senior year, you should get everything set up for graduation. Since this is such an important day for you and your family, you want everything to go smoothly. Follow these steps to ensure a wonderful graduation experience:

1. **Meet with your advisor.** You've already checked your transcript. Now schedule a meeting with your advisor to go over your papers once again. Thank your advisor for his or her help over the years. If your advisor has been especially helpful, write a formal thank-you note.
2. **File all graduation forms.** In most cases, you must file an "Intent to Graduate" form. You might also have to pay a fee. Keep copies of all the forms you file and a copy of your canceled check.
3. **Order your cap and gown.** Usually, this is done through the bookstore. Get it done, because you won't be allowed to march in the procession without the proper academic garb.
4. **Pay all fees (library, traffic, etc.).** You won't be allowed to graduate if you owe the university money. Make sure that your account is fully paid. If there's a problem, work out a payment schedule.
5. **Get graduation tickets.** You may or may not need tickets for family members and friends. Find out well ahead of time so you can get your tickets before they're all given out.
6. **Make hotel reservations.** Over 33,000 students flock to Boston every year to attend college. Imagine what the town looks like when all those colleges are holding graduation ceremonies! Smaller towns may have even more trouble

accommodating visitors. If you expect people from home to share your moment of triumph, make sure you've made hotel reservations well in advance. Rooms get booked fast, so figure at least six months lead time on this.

- Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to College Survival



College Seniors—Making the last year work!

Harder classes. Laziness. Senioritis. It has been said that no year of college is more difficult than that endured by seniors. It is, in fact, quite often a student's senior year that winds up running longer than just two semesters...adding time to their college career and leading into a fifth year when there should have been only four! But what makes academic learning so especially difficult during those final seasons? One would assume that after 3 previous years of apparent success, seniors would find those last months to be a comparative "breeze." But the differences that exist between one's junior and senior years are primarily *psychological* in nature! And, with a little bit of disciplined effort, senioritis can be overcome and more students can go on to walk proudly down the aisle at graduation to receive their degrees.

Avoiding senioritis is, of course, far easier said than done. Even the subconscious notion that "it's almost over" is enough to lead some college seniors to study less and party more. It's only natural to feel as though the war has already been won when you've already emerged victorious from so many smaller academic battles over the preceding years. Nevertheless, one key to beating senioritis is to simply understand, realize, and accept the genuine FACT that you have NOT graduated yet and that there is a very real chance you'll either miss your chance altogether OR wind up spending at least one more semester in school! At the very least, senioritis almost always has a negative impact on grades which, of course, can inherently diminish your career outlook & prospects. Psyche yourself to *be patient* and realize that you may never have to study again in just a few short months. Remind yourself that if you don't hit the books during this last year (maybe even harder than ever!) you may be stressing over school for *more than just these two last semesters*. Even one additional term is going to represent a 50% increase over the amount of time you intended to spend as a matriculated student when you began your "final" year in school! NO amount of relaxation is worth THAT kind of extended stay!

- www.collegeseniors.net

Preparing for Your Future—A Timeline for Senior Year

Whether your plans for next year include joining the workforce or heading to graduate school (or both!), there are steps you should be taking NOW (and throughout your senior year) to prepare.

Career—Searching, Interviewing, Accepting, Success!

- Update your resume and visit the career services office to have it critiqued.
- Check your career center's web site for a calendar of dates and times of career development and job-search workshops and seminars, career and job fairs, and company information sessions. Register for on-campus interviews. Also schedule off-campus interviews.
- Develop an employer prospect list with contact names and addresses from organizations you are interested in pursuing.
- Gather information on realistic salary expectations. Your career services office will be able to help.
- Join professional associations and become an active member to build a network of colleagues in your field. Find a student version of your professional association and take leadership roles. Attend local association meetings to meet potential employers.
- Draft a cover letter that can be adapted for a variety of employers and have it critiqued.
- Participate in interviewing workshops and practice interviews.
- Subscribe to and read two or more professional or trade publications from your major and career field.
- Follow up on all applications and keep a record of the status of each.
- Go on second interviews. Evaluate job offers and accept one.
- Report all job offers and your acceptance to the career services office.

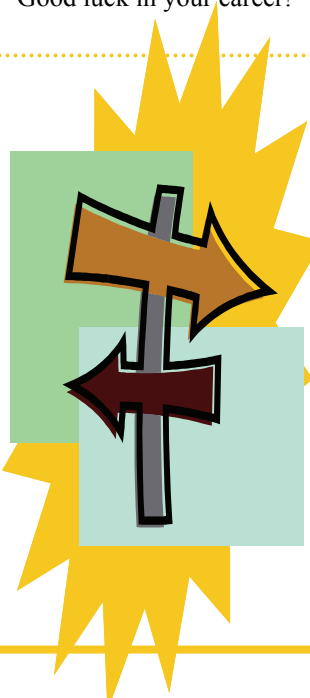
Good luck in your career!

- adapted from www.jobweb.com

Graduate School—Next Steps for Applying

- Send an email to the Admissions Office or departmental secretary at the schools you're interested in. They may be able to put you in contact with a current student so you can ask questions and get first-hand information.
- Request materials from the schools, particularly course catalogues and applications.
- Ask at least two professors and one professional reference to write recommendation letters for you. People like to have at least a month to write a letter.
- Check the appropriate website for a schedule of any upcoming admissions tests you might need to take. Plan to take any required exams by October.
- Look over the admissions materials to identify the specific items you might need to collect for your application packet such as test scores or writing samples.
- Draft a personal statement. You'll most likely need this for any program you're applying to. Have a professor or professional in your anticipated field look over a draft of your personal statement. If a program requests a writing sample, decide what piece of work you'd like to submit. Your writing sample should meet the length and content guidelines indicated in the application. If there are no guidelines, send 5-10 pages of college-level work, clean of professor comments, relevant to the field to which you're applying.
- Request official transcripts (some grad programs ask for 2 copies from each school you've attended). Have the transcripts sent directly to the schools to which you're applying or have a package of them sent to you so you can include them in your application envelopes.
- Make arrangements to visit schools in which you're interested. Call the Admissions Office to set up a tour of the campus. It's also a good idea to call the academic department to meet with the program director or faculty members.
- Update your resume and visit the career services office to have it critiqued.
- You should plan to complete all paper and online applications and the final draft of your personal statement by the end of November.
- Mail packets including all required elements by the end of November. Some schools require two application packets—one to the Graduate Studies Office and one to the department office. Be sure you send the required elements to the right personnel. Follow up to make sure your application is complete.
- You should hear from programs by April.

- adapted from www.barnard.edu



**“You have brains
in your head. You have
feet in your shoes. You
can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You’re on your own.
And you know what you
know. And YOU are the
guy who’ll decide
where to go.”**

- Dr. Seuss

Resume Tips—Ten Resume Killers

Even though your resume took you hours to write, hiring managers will typically spend less than one minute reviewing it. To ensure your resume gets proper attention, avoid these 10 all-too-common blunders:

1. **Not bothering with a cover letter.** Cover letters are so important to the application process that many hiring managers automatically reject resumes that arrive without them. Make the most of your cover letter by expanding on a few of your qualifications, explaining any gaps in employment or providing other information that will entice the employer to read your resume.

2. **Assuming spell-check is good enough.** In a 2007 survey, 63 percent of hiring managers told CareerBuilder.com that spelling errors are the most frequent mistakes they see in resumes. Spell-checkers can pick up many typos—but they won't catch everything (manger vs. manager, for example). Always proofread your resume several times, and ask a friend to give it a final once-over.

3. **Being too generic.** In the same CareerBuilder.com survey, 30 percent of hiring managers said resumes not tailored to the position was the most frequent or annoying mistake. Always customize your resume and cover letter for each job and employer to which you apply. This way, you can tailor your materials to show how you will be a perfect fit for the position.

4. **Focusing on duties, not accomplishments.** Instead of writing a list of job duties on your resume, demonstrate how each duty contributed to your company's bottom line. For example, anyone can plan the company fund-raiser, but if you note that your fund-raiser brought in 50 percent more money than the previous year's event, the hiring manager will be more impressed.

5. **Having a selfish objective.** Employers are trying to determine whether you're a good fit for their organizations, so

everything on your resume should point to your experience. A summary of qualifications that conveniently displays your accomplishments and background is far more effective than a generic objective statement ("To gain experience in...").

6. **Giving your resume format a little "flair".** Unusual fonts or fluorescent pink paper will certainly make your resume stand out—in a bad way. Keep your resume looking professional by sticking with standard white or cream-colored paper, black type, and a common font like Arial or Times New Roman.

7. **Guesstimating your dates and titles.** With the proliferation of background checks, any "upgrades" you give your titles or stretching of employment dates to cover gaps will likely get caught—and you will be eliminated from consideration.

8. **Tell everyone why you left.** Never put anything negative on your resume. If you left the position due to a layoff or because you were fired, bring it up only if asked.

9. **Include lots of personal information.** It's fine if you enjoy fly-fishing on Sunday afternoons, but unless your hobby relates to your career, it doesn't belong on your resume. The same goes for your height, weight, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or any other facts that could potentially be used against you.

10. **Going long.** Your high school job scooping ice cream probably isn't relevant to your career anymore, so there is no reason to include it on your resume. Your resume should be no more than two pages—and no more than a page for most professionals—so only include your most recent and relevant work history. Take it from hiring managers: 21 percent think a resume more than two pages long is the most frequent and annoying resume mistake.

- Kay Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com

Qualities/Skills Employers Look for in New Hires

1. **Communication skills (verbal & written)**
2. **Honesty/integrity**
3. **Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)**
4. **Motivation/initiative**
5. **Strong work ethic**
6. **Teamwork skills (works well with others)**
7. **Analytical skills**
8. **Flexibility/adaptability**
9. **Computer skills**
10. **Detail-oriented**
11. **Leadership skills**
12. **Organizational skills**
13. **Self-confidence**
14. **Friendly/outgoing personality**
15. **Tactfulness**
16. **Well mannered/polite**
17. **Creativity**
18. **GPA (3.0 or better)**
19. **Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker**
20. **Sense of humor**

- www.jobweb.com

Next Step—Career or Graduate School?

There are three reasons why a lot of students start thinking about getting their master's degree near graduation, but there are only two good reasons to do so. The first reason many students want to get their master's is because graduation draws near and they suddenly realize that they're not ready for the real world. They have no idea of what they want to do, no work experiences, no job leads, etc. Because they're unprepared, they've decided to get their master's degree. It sounds impressive, it delays the pressure of getting a job for another two years, and it seems like a program that will finally teach them the job skills they know they need. These students are going over Niagara Falls—a master's degree will no more prepare you for working than a bachelor's degree did. If you're panicked because you don't feel prepared, the best remedy is to get out there and work for a year. Right away you'll start building up skills and get a real sense of what work you like and don't like to do.

The second reason students want to get their master's is because so many professors recommend it. It's important to understand where your professors are coming from. A crowning jewel for professors is for one of their students to go on to get a Ph.D. and to do teaching and research. They

sometimes hope students will take the higher education path because it means that they inspired you so much and taught you so well that you wanted to follow in their footsteps. And yes, if you do want to follow in one of your professor's footsteps, higher education is the required path.

The third reason many students want to get their master's is because they've heard that people with this degree get paid a lot more and have a better chance at getting a job. Some fields require an advanced degree for entry—for instance, law, medicine, scientific research, and college or university teaching. But if you're not planning to go into those fields, a master's degree will usually not increase your starting salary or give you a better chance at winning jobs, because, most of all, employers are hiring based on work experience.

So, the two good reasons for getting your master's are (1) if the career of your choice requires an advanced degree for entry; (2) if it's a dream of yours to get a master's degree. Other than those two reasons, you'd do better to just go get started on your career.

- Patrick Combs, *Major in Success*

Graduate Admissions Tests

Many graduate programs will require that you take one of the following graduate admissions tests:

- The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is the general graduate admissions test and is required for admission to many university graduate programs. Some programs may also require a GRE Subject test. (www.gre.org)
- The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is required for admission to MBA programs. (www.mba.com/mba)
- The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to most law schools. Many require that it be taken by December. (www.lsatsat.org)
- The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is required for admission to almost all US medical schools. (www.aamc.org/students/mcat/)
- The Dental Admissions Test is required for most dental schools. (www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/DAT/)



If it is at all likely that you will be applying to graduate school this year (or in the near future), be sure to take the appropriate graduate admissions tests NOW. The material will never be fresher to you than it is this year. Even if you are planning to take a year or two off before graduate school, take the exams THIS year! But prepare well so that you only have to take the test once—because unlike the ACT and SAT, many graduate schools will average multiple graduate admissions test results rather than take the best scores. We have started a lending library of preparation materials for our students who are studying for graduate school admissions exams—come by and check it out!

Graduate School—Helpful Resources on the Web

- <http://www.gradschools.com/>
- <http://www.drew.edu/depts/CareerCenter.aspx?id=22771>
- <http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/>
- <http://www.justcolleges.com/grad/>
- <http://www.gradview.com>
- http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php
- <http://www.graduateguide.com/>
- <http://iiswinprd01.petersons.com/GradChannel/>

For help with personal statements:

- <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/gradapp.html>

For help with financial aid:

- <http://www.finaid.org>
- <http://www.fastweb.com>

STUDY BREAK

www.PrintSudoku.com

		7	5	8		6		9
6		2	1					4
	3							
7		3			8			
		8				1		
			7			4		2
							4	
2					9	3		7
3		9		6	5	8		

Medium Difficulty

Stumbling Around on the Web

Have you stumbled upon stumble-upon.com? According to at least one “top ten” list, it is a favorite among college students—so you may have already discovered it.

Anyone can go to the stumbleupon website and link to other sites based on topic and user feedback. I found it helpful when looking for information for some of the newsletters. It directed me to sites I had not found through other search engines, and the feedback from other users helped me pinpoint which sites were useful.

If you choose to register as a member, you can indicate your topics of interest, and stumbleupon will send you to various websites that deal with similar topics—then based on your feedback (thumbs up or down) it will fine tune your list of interests and direct you to further sites. If you’ve ever gotten lost on the web—following links from one website to another—you can understand the need to approach this diversion with caution. It is very easy to lose track of time!

Welcome back to Study Break! In this section of our newsletter you will find a puzzle as well as some other type of “diversion.” We may include a bit of trivia, some humor, an interesting website to check out—or anything else that strikes our fancy. We hope that you have some fun with it, and feel free to pass on suggestions for future Study Breaks!

Scholarships

More school ahead next year? Did you research scholarships over the summer? If so, wonderful! If not, you’re already behind. Many scholarships have deadlines in the fall. You should review the renewal criteria for any scholarships that you are currently receiving, and check with your major department and the financial aid office at your current and/or graduate school to discuss any additional scholarships that they offer. The web is also a good resource—contact Marilyn in the Quest office for a list of scholarship search engines.

Memo From Marilyn

Remember, this is **your** newsletter, and your input is welcome! Please let us know what features and articles you find most useful. If you’d like to see a particular topic addressed or have a suggestion for a “Study Break” activity, send me an e-mail. Or better yet, submit an article! You can reach me at Marilyn@questctr.com.

Mark Your Calendars Now!

Meet with QFK high school seniors preparing to enter college! These students could benefit from your advice and experience. They would love to hear about how you dealt with “the roommate from hell” as well as what everyday life is like at college. Please plan to come and share your helpful tips and “words of wisdom.” Many of your fellow Quest graduates participate in this event every year, so this is a great opportunity for you to reconnect with other Quest Alumni.

Watch your e-mail for notification of the dates and times, and be sure to RSVP as soon as possible. We always have a full house!

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