

From Freshman to Full-Time

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Now that the college semester is fully underway and I have settled into my professional role, I felt that it was time to reflect back over the years of schooling I have had and perhaps give a little advice to students as they progress through theirs. I may be focusing this post towards those in engineering-related fields; however I believe that it can relate to anyone looking for advice as they travel through the various levels of education into the professional career.

My journey started back in the fall of 2011, as a young high school graduate without a clue to what I wanted to do, either professionally or academically. I had chosen to enroll at a community college in the Mechanical Engineering Technology program my uncle had been in many years prior. Through these first years I lived on campus, becoming an active member of several student organizations and a resident assistant.

Now don't believe that I had thought it was easy. Progressing into the engineering program I came to doubt whether I could make it; especially as I watched several of my classmates either fail out or drop out from the stress or pressure. However I persevered and eventually made it through my first two years. I luckily enough got accepted into a 4 year college and attained an internship at a local manufacturer to gain real world experience.

Transferring to a 4 year college has many benefits as well as increased cost. I believe that I filled out more than 20 scholarship applications which applied to where I lived or towards my academic program. Eventually, luck was on my side and I gathered a good sum which aided in relieving the cost of tuition at my new institution. This fueled me to maintain my GPA, grow my resume, and grow professionally.

Growing professionally became my aspiration as I came into my junior year of university. I reached out to the many different professional assistance programs that were offered. From career services and internship coordination; there were many opportunities to learn and develop. Utilizing these services I practiced interview skills, resume writing, and how to write a professional email. With these skills I was able to gain several internship offers, both from my previous employer as well as another, which allowed me to choose which option would benefit my career the best.

Going into my senior year I began to stress what I would be doing after I made it to that moment where I was handed my diploma. My senior project was another internship at a local company which aided in building my resume and professional skills. Using what I had learned from the previous year I began applying to job positions in early November of 2014. I also attended the various career fairs offered by my university (later to find out that I had met my now employer at one of them).

I started out getting notices that positions I had applied for were filled or that opportunities at these companies had changed. I did not let this stall my efforts however. I continued to submit applications, made follow-ups to potential employers, and network. From January 2015 to May 2015 when I graduated with my Bachelors I had been to 17 Interviews (6 on the phone & 11 in person) with 7 different companies. Going to these interviews never made me any less nervous about my future or what could happen.

On the day of my graduation I had not yet heard from a company that I had an offer or another interview so I was skeptical that my career would kick off so soon. The morning after the graduation ceremony I woke up to a voicemail on my phone, I had an offer (which I would later not take) and I would eventually have to make a challenging decision with multiple opportunities presenting themselves. I would eventually accept the role at Whelen Engineering Company after meeting with their engineering team and knowing that their mission was one that I could support.

10 Things to take away from this...

1. Don't stress in the beginning; deciding your future as you leave high school and transition to college is a big leap and just know that everything will fall into place.
2. Don't get discouraged when the going gets tough.
3. Get an internship, or many, as they are invaluable experiences and will make your job search later on that much easier.
4. Apply for scholarships; a lot of them. There are often reports that many scholarships go unclaimed every academic year and you never know what could apply to you.
5. Develop professionally and don't be afraid to utilize your resources. The people at your college or university are there to help you and are often very knowledgeable about professionalism and careers.
6. Always continue to network as opportunities come when you least expect them and you never know if a new connection will be the next open door.
7. Go to career fairs. You may not know what you want to do after college but these are great networking opportunities and they help you learn what's out there in your field.
8. Apply early. They say the early bird gets the worm and in many cases this is true.
9. Take every interview one step at a time. Doing your research for companies and following up with thank you emails goes a long way when looking for a professional opportunity.
10. Accept a position you know you will be happy at. Nothing is worse than going into a company whose culture, mission, and future doesn't meet what you expect and can often lead to stress and unhappiness.

Thank you all for reading and I hope that new students and soon to be grads can take something from this.

Original post: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/from-freshman-full-time-ryan-seymour>

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