

When Opportunity Knocks, Will You Open the Door?

In the film, "Dead Poets Society," Robin Williams plays the role of an English teacher, John Keating, at a private boys' school. Keating exhorts his students to *carpe diem* - seize the day. Every day should be prized, held dearly and seized. Part of *carpe diem* means recognizing the opportunities offered to you, and acting on them. When opportunities present themselves to us, we decide whether to use them or let them pass us by. If we do let opportunities go by, we must ask ourselves why. Are we too busy, too afraid, or do we simply lack motivation? If we do seize opportunities that come our way, we can use them for personal growth, knowledge and exposure to new people and ideas.

As the Director of Career Services, I find I use the word 'opportunity' more frequently than any other word. I talk to students about employment opportunities, learning opportunities, co-op and internship opportunities, opportunities for travel or the opportunity to enhance their lives in any number of other ways.

What about your opportunities? Why did you come to college? I would guess you came to further your education, increase the possibility for future happiness and make plans for a career. Part of that planning was the decision to attend your college or university, and now you must take advantage of the opportunities this institution provides to assist you in planning your future.

No doubt you came to get a college education, but what does that mean for you? Attending classes, taking exams and writing papers are all part of the educational experience, but don't sell yourself short by only attending classes and going straight home. You can get a fantastic education within the classroom and so much more outside the traditional academic arena. This is where you complete your education. Look around you; the opportunities abound!

One opportunity for students on many campuses is the offering of career fairs throughout the year. Oftentimes, hundreds of employers will come to campus to meet face to face with students. Consider this a chance to educate yourself about the job market, internships, professional employment related to your major and what you must do to prepare for careers with their organizations.

Another opportunity Career Services departments provide is on-campus interviews with employers seeking students from nearly every major. According to the Job Outlook 2008 Survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, employers expect to hire 16 percent more college graduates in 2008 than in 2007. Currently, the job market is quite strong and college graduates are in high demand. Students at many institutions are fortunate to have employers come directly to campus to recruit. Interviews usually last 30 minutes and present the opportunity to sell yourself to prospective employers.

Also, recruiters usually schedule information sessions when they come to campus to meet with students and educate them about their organizations and the opportunities they have to offer. Recruiters discuss co-op and internship availabilities and jobs for college graduates. All this great information, plus pizza and cokes - what a deal!

Oftentimes, my greatest frustration on the job is witnessing missed opportunities. All of the activities I have mentioned are opportunities laid before you; don't miss out. Not seizing these opportunities will be your loss and will set you up for future regrets. Don't let that happen to you.

You have the chance to graduate as a polished professional, ready to take on the world. What you learn in the classroom will prepare you in your academic field, but you must look for the opportunities outside of the classroom that will provide the tools you will need for success in life and in your career. All of this takes personal initiative and a willingness to make the sacrifices today for the happiness you want tomorrow. When you graduate, I hope you will be able to say that you did all you could to acquire a rich, full educational experience. It's really up to you, so remember the message of John Keating -- *carpe diem*.