



Issue Date: February 3, 2006

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## **Alum, career counselor, shares tips for employment**

In the past, recent graduates of prestigious universities have relied solely on in-school counseling for advice on how to choose and pursue the career of their choice. A recent article in Newsweek, however, reported that college students are turning in droves to private career counselors, a service that can cost upwards of \$3000 for consultations.

As a career counselor and columnist who specializes in federal government-related professions, Lily Whiteman '81 has benefited from this increasing demand for personalized advice on how to land the job of one's choice. This Friday, Whiteman will offer free advice to current Wesleyan students in an event hosted by the Career Resource Center.

Whiteman graduated from Wesleyan with a degree in Earth Science, but realized while completing her senior thesis that she enjoyed the process and style of technical writing. Through her work with various public health and environmental agencies, she combined her science degree with her graduate study in writing. Before long, friends and relatives sought her editorial advice when writing cover letters, resumes, and essays for job applications that they worried were inadequate.

The uncertainty Whiteman witnessed among her friends, as well as 14 years of observing the hiring practices of the governmental agencies she worked for, eventually led Whiteman to go into business as a career counselor.

"My advice reflects my experience coaching hundreds of successful job-seekers and incorporates guidance from dozens of hiring managers who serve as the gatekeepers to federal jobs," said Whiteman.

During her talk, Whiteman will focus on the perks of working for the federal government.

"There are many fantastic opportunities for current students and recent graduates," she said.

These include paid training or mentoring programs that might begin as summer internships, but can often lead to long-term employment. In addition, many of these programs specially recruit minorities and students in the sciences.

Whiteman acknowledges that some may be skeptical of working for federal government.

She stresses, however, that it is crucial to make the distinction between working for a federal agency and working for Congress. Government agencies address weighty issues, while still offering competitive salaries and great benefits, such as significant student loan repayment programs. On the other hand, unless a graduate aims to get first-hand experience in the mechanics of how Congress functions, she feels that employees of Congress are often overworked and underpaid.

Either way, Whiteman's advice to college graduates is not to waste time getting experience in the field; an entire generation of federal employees is slated to retire over the next few years, at which time opportunities for employment in the federal government will flourish.

Besides, Whiteman says, with all the exciting training programs open to recent graduates, it's easy to fill those post-college years with experiences that are meaningful, even if the ultimate goal is not long-term employment.

"Why spend your summer flipping burgers when you could be hobnobbing with power brokers?" Whiteman said.

In addition to advice on how to find and secure a job in the government, Whiteman will also offer more general guidance for those seeking employment, whether the coveted job is at a financial consulting firm or the local Dairy Queen.

One of the most important tips she offers is to be confident that your resume will pass the "ten-second test." She feels that a resume should be formatted so that the employer can tell immediately why you are an outstanding candidate for the job.

Second, she says, do not be scared by rejection.

"If you really want to work somewhere, continue to apply," Whiteman said. "Different people are responsible for hiring at different times, and persistence reflects well on the applicant."

Whiteman also suggests seeking "friendly fire" from as many people as you can. Ask your friends and family to review your resume or cover letter and identify what stands out the most.

Finally, Whiteman advises job applicants to submit a hard-copy over an online application whenever possible. This is because people are more predisposed to make hasty mistakes or confuse the submission deadline with on-line applications.