

Placement Trends for College Women

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THE STANDING headline of recent months—"Sharp Rise Shown in Private Employment," can well be underscored by college placement offices. In practically all the fields which liberal arts college graduates enter into, there are straws in the wind that point to the shift from an employer's to an employee's market. Thirty per cent more openings in business, research, governmental and other non-commercial organizations have been reported to the Smith College Vocational Office in the last nine months than were reported a year ago.

Of the 1937 placements of Smith College alumnae and seniors by mid-April, thirty-nine per cent were in teaching; twenty-eight per cent in business; a like percentage in government departments, hospitals, research foundations, and other non-profit making organizations; two per cent in social work; and three per cent in miscellaneous fields.

Within the business group the largest number have been placed in secretarial work; other fields in order of the number placed are: department stores, research, insurance, service representative work for telephone companies, copywriting, statistics, fashion, and libraries. One fortunate senior has been accepted for a government internship by the National Institute of Public Affairs; several expect to obtain "system service" work with the International Business Machines Company; and one is to do work in archaeology at the University of Chicago. Within the government, research, and other institutional

classifications, statistical placements lead; then come secretarial, laboratory technician, research, and museum placements.

Placement of many seniors will not be feasible until after they have completed post-graduate training required by the professions they have selected. Others, who have expectations of jobs because of favorable interviews, will not receive definite notice of placement for at least another month or until prospective employers make their final decisions. Those who go into fields of retailing, hospital laboratories (after first giving a required amount of volunteer service), and the public school system (assuming that they have met state educational requirements) are employable soon after graduation.

Other indications of rising trends in employment of college graduates are the visits of more employers to the campus on recruiting trips; the reinstatement of paid training courses by the telephone, advertising, business machine, and other industries; increasing salaries; and the number of openings discovered in the course of field work by placement workers.

Already there is a shortage of well-trained secretaries, personable and willing to shoulder responsibility; a lack of statisticians with either previous experience or secretarial training; a demand for graduates with science majors and language equipment; and openings for placement and employment specialists.

Social work agencies are experiencing a marked shortage of workers because trained persons occupied with relief prob-

lems during the depression have been re-absorbed by private agencies and the government. The Social Security Board has not been able to find enough trained workers to fill the positions of investigators and is already accepting recent college graduates without professional training.

In teaching, however, the shift from an oversupply to a scarcity of good candidates is less marked than in business. Since the schools and other educational institutions were not adversely effected by the depression so soon as business concerns, it is not surprising that they have not yet returned to prosperity in a like degree. Despite enlargements of teaching staffs and some increasing demands for teachers, there is not yet a serious shortage. However, there are indications that such a shortage will soon come about. Although it is still difficult today to find paid teaching positions for graduates without previous experience or apprentice training, there is already a growing reluctance on the part of graduates to accept unpaid or even partially paid teaching apprenticeships while business frequently offers immediate opportunities to become self-supporting. During the past seven years the number of graduates from the liberal arts colleges who have succeeded in getting into teaching has been comparatively small, and will probably continue to be so unless the public schools can again add a fair percentage of recent graduates to their staffs each year.

In the department store field the usual beginning position continues to be selling. From this as a start, college graduates go into buying positions, advertising, styling, personnel, and all the other outgrowths, but selling first seems to be absolutely necessary. Of course many stores have "executive training squads," for which

college graduation is usually necessary. This training includes practical experience in selling. The only difference in the picture this year is that the stores are more frankly eager to get the best of the college crop and that salaries are better.

What adjustments may be expected as the situation becomes intensified? Obviously salaries will be raised to tempt desirable workers to new positions. The tendency to raise professional standards, so marked during the depression, will be checked by a demand for workers that is greater than the supply. There may be expansion of the practice of recruiting workers to be trained "on the job." The recently announced United States Civil Service examination for Junior Social Science Analysts, for which college seniors are eligible, bears out this prediction. Appointments are to be made in departments where the recruits will be trained for careers in the public service.

However many openings there may be for college graduates today or tomorrow, field work will still claim its place on the "must" list of the Smith College Vocational Office. In the past two years about 230 such trips have been made to schools, business firms, hospitals, museums, social work agencies, government bureaus, and commercial placement agencies.

Information gathered in this way is made available to students in reports which aid them in finding the answers to their vocational questions or in discovering where their vocational interests lie. Just as important as this general background material are the timely indications of trends, a knowledge of which is vital in counseling undergraduates who are choosing their courses of study. Such up-to-date information on employers' personnel requirements is a perennial need in counseling and placement work.