

Job scarcity prompting seniors to stay in school

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—Along with the regular textbooks, pens and notebooks, Jen Jones has a GMAT study guide, an LSAT practice test and a list of American University majors crammed into her pink and blue backpack.

A senior graduating in May in economics, Jones said the recent economic turmoil has made her unsure about immediately entering her future career in economics. Instead, she is thinking about going to business school, law school or maybe obtaining a second major.

“There isn’t a market for new jobs right now,” she said. “Companies are laying off employees by the hundreds—why would they want to hire more? My plan is to go back to school somewhere and wait for a couple of years.”

Jones is one of thousands of university seniors graduating in May in the United States. Many students like her are beginning to wonder whether to find jobs or go back to school after they receive their diplomas.

Marcus Wilson spent Sunday afternoon protesting near the National Museum Building in Washington. Inside, world leaders met at the G-20 Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy, which resolved to stimulate their countries’ economies to fix the growing world financial crisis.

Wilson, a senior in management at the University of Maryland, held up a sign that said, “Keep Capitalism Alive.” He hoped world leaders would help the economy but not resort to socialism to do so.

“I am worried about my future in finding a job. I have already sent out résumés and done a couple of interviews, but it doesn’t look good,” he said. “Our leaders need to help companies create more jobs around the world, not just pump money into their pockets.”

Wilson said going back to school would help him stand out from the rest of the crowd, but he doesn’t think he could last through two or three years of more schooling.

“I am so tired of going to school,” he said. “I will try to find a job in management, but if not, I will take something else, somewhere else and hope the economy gets better in a few years.”

On the campus of George Washington University, Todd Mortenson smiled when asked if he was concerned about finding a job as a graduating senior.

“I have been worried about finding a job for four years,” said the international business major. “When I first entered (the) university I knew that an undergraduate degree would not be enough for me. I knew that I would be getting a Ph.D. The only question is what type and where I will study.”

Mortenson said employers aren’t looking for young students fresh out of college anymore. Instead they are looking for experienced adults.

"In today's companies, employees are expected to be able to have more than one job or skill," he said. "To get a job you can't just know math, or just know English or law. You have to have a large array of skills—more than you can get in just four years of schooling."

Mortenson's friend, Sal Vega, is a junior at George Washington studying education. She said she does not expect that finding a teaching job will be hard after graduation.

"I know there is a growing need for teachers," she said. "I think most of the job losses have come in the business and services sectors. But careers like education and medicine seem to be pretty stable."

However, Vega acknowledges any further education would be helpful in today's world.

"It is scary," she said. "The future is so unknown that many students are second-guessing themselves."

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Editor's Note—U student Jed Layton is reporting from Washington D.C. through the Hinckley Institute of Politics.

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