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## College grads adjust game plans and expectations

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Staff writer

Sara White had an internship, studied abroad and participated in English club. But nearly six months after graduating from St. John Fisher College with an English degree, she has yet to find a full-time job in publishing.

"I know I'm not the only person having a tough time," says White, 22. "It's not because I'm not qualified, it's because there aren't any jobs."

In 2007, 51 percent of graduating college seniors had jobs lined up by the time they finished school, but in 2009, that number dipped to 19.7 percent, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The class of 2009 has been ushered into one of the worst economic markets since the Great Depression. However, some of its members have defied high unemployment rates and an exceedingly tight job market.

Among them is Ashley Saile. The 22-year-old, who graduated this year from Roberts Wesleyan College with a dual degree in English and Spanish, took a different approach to ensuring her post-college employment: She applied for the AmeriCorps VISTA Program with Rochester Youth Year and was among 10 local college grads chosen to fill temporary positions at nonprofit organizations. Saile was placed as a mentor liaison at Successful Pathways, which provides support to teenage parents.

Although the position lasts only until next August, Saile says she's not worried about having to find another job at that point — even though many of her friends and classmates are having trouble now. "I'm still unsure as to what I want to do eventually anyway," she says. "Most people don't get right into their careers, so I was open to finding something for now."

Manny Contomanolis, associate vice president and director of Rochester Institute of Technology's co-op and career services, expects, however, that it's going to be even tougher for the class of 2010 to find work. "It's going to still take a while for employment to rebuild what was lost."

In fact, despite the signs of recovery, many economists point out that the job market typically continues to weaken after the rest of the economy strengthens.

After graduating in May from St. John Fisher with a degree in management, 22-year-old Jackie Sedgwick's fear was that she'd be stuck in a position that would get her nowhere. Many of her job offers were for accounting positions, and Sedgwick's goal is to get into sales. So instead of taking one of those accounting jobs, she continued working at the temporary recruiting agency where she was employed during her senior year of college. But in July, Sedgwick decided to move on and briefly moved back in with her mom in Syracuse. "When I look back, I think I turned down those jobs because I was so scared to make the leap into a career," she says.

She's glad she waited. When she moved back to Rochester, her former co-workers helped her score

her current position as a lead coordinator in the operations department at Paychex. She attributes her success to networking and never being afraid to call on her contacts for help.

"It's so important to talk to people and build relationships — networking is key," she says. "I've been really fortunate, and I still believe it's all about who you know."

As for White, 22, she's moved back in with her parents in Mendon. She says she hasn't found a job yet because she's not willing to settle. She even turned down a job offer. "It was a job that would probably have been a step backwards," she said. "I don't want to be stuck in a field I have no interest in."

But until she finds the first job of her dreams, White is spending 25 to 35 hours a week as a freelance editorial assistant for a copy editor.

"I really want to hold out for something I love," she says. "I'm just taking it one day at a time."

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