Ryan

29:56

Interviewer: Testing, testing. OK good. And then do your best to speak into the mic, Ryan. So here it is: The undergraduate experience, graduation, and degree completion are scheduled events which are considered rites of passages. OK, so these are milestones we expect to accomplish. How do you feel about your transition from school to work?

Ryan: Uh, let's see, so from school to work. I think college tries to prepare you for a hands-off approach to working. Especially in the Liberal Arts, you kind of get like a background of how to do research, how to solve problems, but whether or not you can apply that to work is something that you kind of learn on the job. So it gives you a good foundation, but it doesn't necessarily give you an idea of how to do it or how to implement it in the professional world.

Interviewer: OK, did you find that troubling? Or to what degree when you discovered this disconnect were you impacted?

Ryan: It wasn't so much troubling. I would say that it was more kind of just learning on the fly, so definitely improved my problem-solving abilities. I don't think they really teach you to network enough. I mean they would say, you know, keep in contact with people but they don't really push it. And it's actually those, that networking that gets you a job and that kind of helps you out in the professional

world. If I could do it over again, I would definitely network a lot more, and I probably would have chosen a different major.

Interviewer: What's your major?

Ryan: I did Poli Sci. I was originally going to go to law school, and my heart wasn't there. So I didn't feel like devoting three years and hundreds of thousands of dollars for a job that I'd probably hate. So….

Interviewer: OK, so Political Science. Now tell me this, Ryan, were you out on the market from the time you graduated, was there a significant, or how much length of time between graduating, finding a gig and finding *the* gig.

Ryan: So, let's see. I graduated at the end of April in 2012 and then I started here the beginning of November. So I guess there was six months or so where I was searching for work. I was employed, but I'd say underemployed. So I was working two part-time jobs. I got a couple offers. One was for a law firm in Austin doing research, but it was only part-time hours for the time being and Austin's really expensive on your own. So I turned that down. And then I got offered another job in New York City, but it was the same thing. It's also really expensive for what the pay was starting out at. And then I got hired here and ended up sticking around.

Interviewer: Yeah, and so cause you're familiar with this area and comparable salary. Yeah. What would you say were some like challenges or, you know, when you thought, "OK, I'm graduating with a Midwest University Poli Sci degree," in terms of

things you had hoped that theMidwest University degree would have garnered you. Are there some things?

Ryan: So I think when you're a student here you kind of, you grow as a person with a sense of entitlement or arrogance, like "Oh I'm at Midwest University. I should have jobs falling at my feet by the time I graduate, no matter what I studied." But that's really not the case when you graduate. There's plenty of other qualified people from just as good of schools all over the country and the world that are competing for the same jobs that you want. So from a networking standpoint, like maybe someone that's in HR has a Midwest University degree, so they might be willing to give you an interview. And I had that happen once. But whether or not, like I don't think it really got me anywhere else having that degree from here. I had to go through the same kind of, I guess the same qualifications as anyone else.

Interviewer: Yeah, and it's kind of interesting, cause, you know, one thing I hear is that you're like, even though you had theMidwest University degree, it didn't exempt you from the process.

Ryan: No, you still had to take part in the process. You still had to go through the three or four interviews or whatever else that came along.

Interviewer: So do you think for ourMidwest University students, do you think at some point they realize, "Wow!"

Ryan: I think they realize it too late. Cause I mean you graduate, like your last semester you're

just worried about getting that diploma and then being done, no more exams to study for, things like that. And then when you're done, you're like, "Wow, I got student loans that are up for repayment in six months. I've got to find something quick." So it's kind of an eye-opening experience. Once you're done with school you don't have that routine and you don't have all those tax breaks. You don't have your loans in deferment, so…

Interviewer: Like, whoo, I get it. Now this question talks about, it's almost an extension of the other one. Were there certain things that uh, I think you talked about stuff that happened, but it talks about once you graduated, were there certain things you expected to happen or things that didn't happen that you anticipated once you garnered your degree?

Ryan: So I think I expected a lot more opportunities as far as like applying to jobs being given the chance to interview for them with my degree. Uh, that really wasn't the case. I mean you have to sell yourself now. It's not like…. I think throughout your time here, you're kind of pushed like, "Oh you're getting aMidwest University degree, Leaders and Best, you're going to make a name for yourself," things like that. And when it kind of doesn't happen, it's a little disheartening. You get knocked down, but you just keep at it. It's like uh, pardon my French, but throwing shit at the wall and seeing what sticks. You know.

Interviewer: You build character, huh?

Ryan: Yeah, exactly, it builds your grit.

Interviewer: Wow, yeah, and I think for many people I've been interviewing, they do feel that. You're like, "Wait a second. I am the leader, I am the best, and something's not quite adding up."

Ryan: Yeah, there's like that disconnect. I mean there's like from your degree to actually getting hired, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah, and it's very interesting because we know we have so manyMidwest University high achieving people, and the question was like "Shouldn't I be there?" Yeah OK. So now this one helps us understand about support and strategies. So in your transition from school to work, when you look back at that six months where A, you were prior to finishing up that last semester and your rigorous course work and then that six months before you got the real deal. What were some support systems that you used and some strategies that you found helpful?

Ryan: So support system, uh, my fiancé helped me a lot through the job searching process and kind of keeping me encouraged to keep applying. I also tried to rack my brain on who to contact for any possible openings, if they knew of anything opening up. So I e-mailed professors, old GSIs that I remained in touch with, things like that. You don't leave any stones unturned. You know, you check everywhere, try to use any way in to get an interview.

Interviewer: Sure, and that makes good sense. Now did you find that the faculty was helpful at all?

Ryan: Yeah, faculty was fairly helpful. They'd direct me. They're like, "Oh, you know, I've got a friend that's doing this. I can send him your name and your resume." And then I knew Meg from my time back at, when I was at Eastern, so she helped out when she knew that the posting was up online, so….

Interviewer: And honestly it's like your story, that's the way it's supposed to happen, you know, with the research we're shown that your social capital, your networking, your network capital is pretty….

Ryan: I would say that your network capital is probably more important than your education capital, because there's so many people with degrees at this point that you're all qualified for positions.

Interviewer: Which leads me back, cause you said a little bit something, in trying to understand your story, so at what point do you start to realize, "Wow. There's a lot of other qualified people out here?"

Ryan: Uh, I think you realize it when you're at the bar and you meet other people that are looking for jobs.

Interviewer: [Laughs] I love it!

Ryan: So there's that, it's just the, I don't know, I guess you can tell the general climate of the job market for post grads. Like you're all kind of trying to find those entry-level positions in

New York or Chicago or some other major market. So who's to say their Psych degree isn't as good as my Poli Sci degree.

Interviewer: Now did you travel too when you were looking potentially at Texas and New York?

Ryan: I didn't travel. I lived in New Jersey, so I knew the city already. Texas would have been interesting. I've never been past…. I think the furthest south I've been is Delaware, I guess Atlanta maybe, so….

Interviewer: Yeah, that's still different than Texas.

Ryan: So that would have been a little weird. At least it was Austin, so people compare it to Seattle.

Interviewer: And, Ryan, I'm just asking just so I can learn more about you, and if you don't feel comfortable, so…are you part Native or…cause I'm trying to figure like how would that work in Texas? I'm just curious.

Ryan: So my mom's side of the family is Native American. My grandma was full-blooded, so I guess I'm a quarter then. Yeah. So Texas would have been different for sure. I grew up as a military brat though so I've been all over the world and all over the country. So I didn't really have a desire to travel. I kind of knew what these places were like ahead of time. So I knew what I'd be willing to go to, where I wouldn't be willing to go to.

Interviewer: So that's awesome, with your story you had prior knowledge because of what the life-style the military had offered you.

Ryan: Yeah, like I don't have a problem with leaving if I had to. I'm not attached to anywhere enough to where like I'd be really upset if I had to leave.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, like I get it. I get it, especially with this market. So let's see. In that transition, and again it's the same question but worded differently, anything that

has been particularly challenging that you've had to utilize the social support and strategies to navigate the transition?

Ryan: So I guess the most challenging thing is just getting places to give you the time of day. So you try to elicit as many people as you can to kind of put in a good word for you, especially like if you're trying to get into the Higher Education realm of employment. I mean you reach out to any employee you know at the university. Like, "Can I use you as a referral so they know I'm familiar with this place or familiar with the department or something like that?" So that's definitely a challenge, especially if you partied your way through school and you didn't really make those networking decisions or you know, it kind of limits what you're capable of doing after you graduate and kind of closes some doors to you.

Let me see, what other challenges came up? Uh, having a good cover letter too, having a something that shows that you're qualified. I mean you don't want to sell yourself too short but you also don't want to oversell yourself so you've got to try

to find that good balance. And then resume skills, I mean there's how to word your resume, how to format it, things like that. And I guess there's places on campus, like the Career Center where they'll look over your resume, give you advice on it, so that helped out. But I mean if you didn't really put yourself out there, you wouldn't know these things.

Interviewer: So to go back to that point, how involved was the Career Center as part of your decision-making during that last semester?

Ryan: So I used the Career Center I think once or twice. I just had them take a look over my resume, kind of help me frame or like write my personal statement, how I wanted to describe who I am and then just formatting issues. Like how to have the bullet points formatted, shifted over, things like that. But other than that I didn't really use them for much else. I didn't really use them for job postings or anything else. I did use the Alumni Center because I know like the alumni network will post jobs on their site.

Interviewer: And that's good to know. I didn't know that.

Ryan: Yeah, you just create a login account and you get on there, see what other alumni have posted, if they're hiring.

Interviewer: Oh that's good. Now Ryan, and again, originally when I started this, I didn't have a huge interest in Career Center with an angle that dealt with academic advising. Now what do you think made you use it less and not more—the Career Center?

Ryan: Let's see, what made me use it less? Probably my own laziness.

Interviewer: Oh, OK.

Ryan: I commute every day to Ann Arbor cause I lived over in Ypsi, so it was like a half hour bus ride. So by the time classes were done, I didn't really want to stick around. I just wanted to go home. So I'd say probably my own laziness that was the main contributor. I think if I lived on campus or near campus it might have been different.

Interviewer: Interesting, yeah, that's good to know. Cause even I met with Carrie, who actually is the director of the program, to get some anecdotal data from her perspective, because often times I heard our students say, "Well, it wasn't as friendly as I thought." Or "It didn't seem like I was talking to the right people." So but it seems, it's funny your story is like, "Well, hey, you know, I was already off campus and sticking around after class—not such a good fit when my commute, my ride is so lengthy." So yeah you almost wonder if we should have satellites.

Ryan: A satellite yeah would be helpful.

Interviewer: Yeah, cause we're still looking at strategies and stuff. OK so let's see. The next question says, The undergraduate years provided an opportunity to explore learning in and outside of the classroom. Part One: To what degree did the academic experiences prepare you to find gainful employment?

Ryan: Uh, let's see, the academic experiences I think pretty much taught me how to bullshit. Pretty much you have to repeat what they want, like, you know, the points that they're

hammering home in the lectures day in, day out. So you just kind of have to regurgitate that on a paper. And if you learn how to do that early on, you'll be successful in undergrad. I'm sure it's different in graduate school cause then people actually expect you to voice your opinion, like your own thoughts, not something that a GSI is lecturing you about, or a professor.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's kind of interesting.

Ryan: So I think it definitely helped me with that, telling people what they want to know. I think I got my most real-world experience was working with a professor

on the research, so I learned how to research an idea, how to formulate my own hypothesis, see if the sources support it, and then write up about it. So I think that was probably my most beneficial experience. But a majority of the others, I mean it's a typical undergrad [unclear] repeat what they want to hear.

Interviewer: Did you have work-study at all in undergrad?

Ryan: I was awarded work-study, but it didn't fit into my schedule as far as trying to find a place to work, or at least something that I wanted to do. So I don't think I ever actually took advantage of the work-study I was awarded.

Interviewer: Cause we're finding some people say they get some skills there, but it sounds like you got good research skills.

Ryan: Yeah, so I did do the research, and I worked part-time throughout the entire time in school.

Interviewer: Oh wow. So you juggled part-time work and going to school at the same time. Ryan,

I think that's the story most people don't know about. Isn't that interesting? So would you say you had a very low debt ratio, out of curiosity?

Ryan: [Laughs] Oh no. So I was out-of-state my first two years. And then when I transferred here, I petitioned Midwest University for in-state tuition, and they ended up granting me in-state tuition. But I still had to take out loans to pay for school and to live on.

Interviewer: Sure, sure you know I get it. Awesome. So now this Part Two talks about, To what degree did the social aspects of college experience prepare you to find gainful employment?

Ryan: I think it was the social aspects that did get me employment. Staying in touch with professors and other members of the university that you can reach out to. I mean otherwise you wouldn't have known about those opportunities or you would have missed them. So I'd say that the social was probably better than the academic.

Interviewer: Cause you were regurgitating stuff, Ryan. Tell them what they want to hear. OK, so now this question actually you touched a little bit upon it, because when I was researching and started working out the questions, my chair had said, "These are young people." So since they have no frame of reference of having professional career lives, blah blah, we wrote this question in the context we didn't think that young people would be impacted by the economy. So this question actually, Tell

us a little bit about, how do you think timing, your timing into today's market when you graduated, how that, to what degree the economic climate impacted your own transition from school to work?

Ryan: So I'd say that it definitely did impact. I started my freshman year the year of like the bubble burst, the housing burst, and the economic downturn. So that was an interesting couple years through undergrad, cause you're like "Wow I wonder if I'm going to be able to get hired? I don't want to have to go back to school to avoid paying my loans." So I'd say it was looking better by the time I graduated.

But I mean it's still a struggle. Just because people have openings doesn't mean they're not going to be flooded with qualified applicants.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that's a good point, because…. And it's really interesting to see the different cohorts come through. Because it sounded like even when you started, you were aware that there's a bubble crash of housing.

Ryan: Yeah, so it's like why couldn't I have been born a few years earlier or a few years later? You know.

Interviewer: So you came in what 08?

Ryan: I started in 07. So right around that time is when things started happening.

Interviewer: And interestingly, 07, that graduation class in December would be the platform for this research. I spent more time with those recent alumni than I spent with them their entire time

atMidwest University. And I thought to myself, “My goodness, we’ve got something here.” And we start to realize, yeah, young people are pretty aware something’s not right. Let’s see, now this question again is just trying to get a little bit more understanding. It says, Transition is defined as

> a turning point. So it’s between two periods. And that’s why it’s called understanding your school-to-work experience. So how do you make sense of your path from school to work in the context of your short-term career aspirations and then to what degree are those short terms supporting long-term goals you may have had or still have?

Ryan: So short-term goals: my number-one goal after graduating was obviously to get a job at least for a year or two to figure out what I wanted to do. So, let’s see, once I got hired full time, I was excited that I’d be able to pay off my loans as they came up. But long-term wise, it’s just another, it’s a stop off. I’d like to eventually carry on with school, once I figure out what I want to do. So I don’t really know how else to answer that.

Interviewer: So do you think, I know you touched a little bit upon earlier, like so I’ll build onto that. So you came in, you studied Political Science, you studied Political Science theory, so when you segued away from pursuing, you know, life in the political science world, to any degree do you think that’s impacted by the labor market or is it driven by a different decision?

Ryan: I think it’s driven by a different decision. I did Poli Sci originally cause I was going to go

to law school. And then once that changed, I'm stuck with a Poli Sci degree, so I've got to find the best way to use that degree. So it's really hard to just have like a bachelor's in Poli Sci. You've got to do something else with it. You've got to do, you know, public policy. You've got to do the law sector, or I guess even enter government work, you know, as CIA, FBI, or some type of government department. So I guess that would be like my overall goal to either work for the government or public policy. So getting hired I mean trumped that initially because, you know, got….

Interviewer: You get in where you fit in.

Ryan: Yeah, you've got to get in where you fit in. You've got to be able to put food on your table. When you don't have student loans to rely on anymore to pay your way, you've got to start making some of your own money that's not 7.50 an hour. So….

Interviewer: Oh trust me, I know. Preach to the choir, my friend. So now, Ryan, so you've come here and you're basically like, I love to tell people I'm familiar with their research too, this five generations in the workplace. And you were formerly a student. To what degree that exposes you to a different realm about the university and then about you?

Ryan: So I think as a student, you don't realize how much goes on behind the scenes. You kind of, I don't know you've got these rose-colored glasses on. You realize how

hypocritical the university is. Like is it really for the students? I mean they put on this big front that it's for the students, but actions speak louder than words. So there's a lot of that. You also don't realize that it's the lecturers that bear the grunt of educating us. Where are the professors? [I: Researching.] Exactly, you're lucky if you have a 300-level class with a professor that's not a lecturer. So I think you definitely have, at least I do, I have more respect for the lecturers that are out there day in, day out. What else? You also see how, or you see how the university will bend rules to accommodate certain departments versus other departments, playing it politically.

Interviewer: And sometimes it just seems like it's a campaign, you know, when you look at political theory, you probably could apply it to here cause it just seems like OK is that team leading or? It just feels that way sometimes.

Ryan: Exactly. Well, you know, they're going to give the most support to those that will bring in the most donation dollars, so their Billions for Buildings campaign that they got going on right now. So they're going to like run the athletic department out in front, or the B school or the School of Engineering or the Med School.

Interviewer: So surprise.

Ryan: You know, not LS&A which has the largest amount of students on campus. It's going to be a second thought.

Interviewer: Yeah absolutely, cause I don't think they bring as big as dollars as athletics and the business school. Yeah, so one more thing. So you're here, you're working with a multiplicity of age brackets. What are your thoughts?

Ryan: There's definitely those that know what's going on and then those that don't. Just working with the different departments across campus, I'm surprised at how clueless some people are like what's going on or like what needs to get done. So that's been interesting. I don't know if they're just close to retirement and they're kind of just kind of riding it out. Or if… [I: So you can tell.] Or if the complacency's just there after years of working the same job.

Interviewer: Sure. At any point when you see those collective of employees, what do you think to yourself?

Ryan: How can students relate to them? You know, like if the average age in an office is 60 and your clientele are 18 to 22 year olds, are they going to be able to relate? I mean they're getting two different types of mail. They're getting AARP and you're getting credit card offers. So how…like how can they relate? I mean yeah sure they have experience, they're wisened, but a student wants to feel like they can relate to who they're getting advice from and things like that.

Interviewer: OK good, it sounds like we might have to put more young people on the front lines.

Ryan: Yeah, but it's hard when, you know, they want people with doctorates for entry-level positions.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, that's scary, like what does that tell you about the market though?

Ryan: I saw a place in New York City that was hiring a receptionist. They wanted the receptionist to have a Master's degree to answer and transfer phone calls.

Interviewer: Stop! Scary, isn't it? Yeah, you used to just be able to have a high school diploma.

Ryan: Yeah, high school diploma. Seriously.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's kind of like audacious to ask for a Master's.

Ryan: Yeah, so now it's like, man, do I really want to go do that if I have to have a Master's to be a receptionist?

Interviewer: Yeah, right, isn't that frightening? Our final question, Ryan, OK looking at the collective of young people who are starting and exiting out becoming an alumni

like yourself someday, are there any things specifically that we can improve that transition from school to work for the next set of millennial graduates?

Ryan: I would say they need to push networking even more than they do currently. And I guess even like reaching out from the Career Center, like have the Career Center reach out even more. Students are going to forget. If it's always in front of them, then they'll remember. But if it's like once every now and then, I'm going to forget. "Oh yeah, that happened." Yeah, so I would say colleges should push networking and not just for certain departments. They need to push it campus-wide. You know, you can't single out the law school or the engineering program or even the B school where their success comes from networking. Why

can't the Philosophy Department have like a group of alumni that they've networked with that they can have students reach out to?

Interviewer: I don't know, maybe they've never thought about it. It's kind of interesting, right?

Ryan: It's where the university puts the resources at or where the different schools put the resources at.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that's kind of interesting though, because you're right. I mean is it one of these things we're picking again like why we think the resources go there?

Ryan: Hmm hmm, versus why they're not here.

Interviewer: Huh, scary, isn't it, Ryan? Well, awesome Ryan. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Ryan: I think that's all I've got.

Interviewer: Awesome. [End of Recording] Ryan 19 March 10, 2014