

At times of immense economic pressures and uncertainty, navigating the job market can be extremely challenging. Students who graduated during the Great Recession of 2007-2009 faced some of the challenges you are facing today. They're here to share some advice and words of encouragement with you on how to make it through.

JESSICA SINHA, B.S. Chemistry
Marketing & HR Manager, Criterion Edge (Regulatory Writing Company)

"Think outside the box. There are SO many paths one can take from a science job. Being a scientist/chemist isn't the only job out there for you."

First Job after Graduation: Intern, Merck

AARTI SANKRITHI, B.S. Chemical & Biomolecular Eng.
Manager, Supply Chain Finance, Nordstrom

"The most valuable thing I learned at UIUC was how to learn. Curiosity, critical thinking and hard work are an unstoppable combination."

First Job after Graduation: Associate Engineer, Abbott

KAREN STEWART, Ph.D. Chemistry
Senior Scientist, Covestro

"Be flexible with your expectations. I was unable to secure a job in industry after graduating, as most companies had hiring freezes, so I considered a postdoc as a way to gain knowledge in new areas and enhance my résumé. It was the same time that I started to network in earnest, which was beneficial both professionally and personally."

First Job after Graduation: Postdoctoral Associate, MIT

ELIZABETH HAUGHTON, B.S. Chemical & Biomolecular Eng.
Sr. Engineer, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions

"Never underestimate anything in your first job. There is a huge learning curve between school - what you've known your whole life - and the working world. You will make mistakes - learn from them and don't make the same mistake twice. Work hard. Learn lots. Accomplish your tasks - make lists. If you say you're going to get something done, get it done."

First Job: Associate Product Specialist, Ingredion

PAUL MLYNARCZYK, B.S. Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
Senior Analyst, Post Market Surveillance, Johnson & Johnson

"Be flexible and open to different types of roles. Research which companies and roles are being hired most in the current climate, and tailor your résumé and application approach towards those. The average professional changes jobs at least 6 times in their career, so your first job or company most likely won't be your last, but all professional experience is valuable."

First Job after Graduation: Quality Engineer, ArcelorMittal

NADINE (SHERIDAN) CIOLLI, B.S. Chemistry
Manager of Demand Planning, Reyes Coca-Cola Bottling

"As I applied for jobs prior to graduation, I was barely getting any responses which was very disheartening. I accepted the first job offer that I received, and I lived with my parents for two years to save as much money as I could. Once I got my foot in the door, I was able to gain experience and determine where I wanted to go with my career. I have worked for 3M, Johnson and Johnson, and currently a Coca-Cola bottler. I never imagined I would have worked for these companies when I wasn't receiving any responses on my job applications back in 2009."

My advice would be to get your foot in the door of a company, save money, work hard, and then pursue your career dreams once the economy starts to pick up. Good luck, Illini!"

First Job after Graduation: Quality Control Chemist, Dober

NATASHA YEUNG, Ph.D. Chemistry
Sr. Scientist, BioMarin Pharmaceutical

"Don't be afraid to apply to jobs that appear to be outside of your specialty or the job description is not an 80-100% match. Hiring managers and the hiring process is sometimes subjective and the hiring manager just might like your combination of skills."

Do your research. Find out what the startups or smaller companies are in your field. Smaller companies are more willing to take a chance on new graduates with little or no experience in industry/field. You are also most likely to be able to email a hiring manager or HR personnel directly and have your résumé viewed."

LinkedIn is a good resource to find people and send your résumé to hiring managers directly. Even if you don't know someone, there is a chance that they will help you. But if you don't try, there is a 100% rate of failure."

First Job after Graduation: Post Doctoral Scientist, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

NAN JIANG, B.S. Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
Intellectual Property Attorney, Dickinson Wright PLLC

"Network by consulting with the staff at the Career Services, company's representatives at the career fair, and/or reach out to Illinois Alumni. When networking, make sure to mention your interest as well as why you are reaching out. This way, companies can keep you in mind for future openings."

Perform some self-analysis about your future career. What do you want to do? (and how can you get there?) Also, what do you lack in preparation? If you don't know how to get to your destination, this is where networking comes in. Don't hesitate to ask questions."

First Job after Graduation: Intellectual Property Specialist, Dickinson Wright PLLC