

# The ADVOCATE

## Health care, technology still good bets for job Jobs remain plentiful in some industries

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Appeared on March 12, 2009

Fairfield County colleges see their students continuing to find work despite the declining economy. That may be because many are older people returning to school to sharpen their skills and stay competitive.

"Credited or non-credited courses are always an indicator to a future employer that you are readying for a new opportunity," said Elizabeth Roop, dean of academic affairs at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport.

"In a bad economy, people whose skills are the strongest are not let go. There's a big market for cutting-edge skills in any industry or field," said Catherine Gorlin, associate dean of academic affairs at Norwalk Community College in Norwalk.

James Schmotter, president of Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, said education remains the key as the working world continues to demand more and more.

"Changes in technology, organizational change and the economy -- all mean that school is never out," Schmotter said. "Coming back for a degree or an individual course or getting in-house training on the job is part of everybody's lives now."

The areas in which Fairfield County students are finding work include health care, justice and law, computer science and technology, and social services. David Lewis, chief executive officer of OperationsInc, a human resources consultancy in Stamford, refers to these as "safer industries" to pursue. Schools collectively cited that opportunities in health care seem to be particularly abundant.

"The allied health field is a robust field. We're starting a program for physician assistants and that's also a growing field," Gorlin said.

Schmotter agreed about the health care opportunities.

"The nursing graduates basically have their own pick of jobs. That's a shortage that's not going away," he said.

Whether someone is a student or is thinking about returning to school, Lewis advised looking at the bigger picture when it comes to education during rough financial times.

"You need core skills as opposed to skills geared toward one industry," he said. "Take courses that are applicable to a number of different industries. You don't want to put all your eggs in one basket and be a one-trick pony."

Lewis said the practice of getting a degree, working a year, then going back to college isn't a good idea in the bad economy.

"I would stay in school at this point, the strategy being that a year from now the market has to be a better environment than coming out as a graduate in 2009," Lewis said.