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Patterns That Determine Whether Your Senior Graduates With an Offer

Why strong students with supportive families still end up searching after graduation, and what actually changes the outcome.

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A NOTE FROM ROSE

I have spent nearly two decades watching the same five patterns unfold, in students at every kind of institution, across every major, in every job market.

After nearly a decade directing a career center at a Florida university, leading a team that served 16,000 students, managing over 200 employer relationships, and personally coaching hundreds of seniors through the job search, I have seen what separates the students who graduate with signed offers from the ones who don't.

It is almost never what families expect. It is rarely GPA. It is rarely major. It is rarely the strength of the job market or the competitiveness of the field. The students who struggle almost always share one or more of the patterns described in this guide, patterns that are entirely predictable once you know what to look for, and entirely addressable with the right support at the right time.

I share these patterns not as a checklist to hand your student, but as a lens. *If you can see the pattern clearly, you can make a better decision about what kind of support your student actually needs.* That is all this guide is designed to do.

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GCDF CCSP NCDA FCD INSTRUCTOR MBTI PRACTITIONER INTEGRATIVE ENNEAGRAM

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PATTERNS 1 - 3 What sets the trajectory before most families realize it has been set

1 The timing problem: most students don't realize the search has started until it has already cost them.

The first wave of fall recruiting, where many of the strongest entry-level opportunities exist, moves in September and October. A student who begins building their materials in November isn't starting late by their own measure. They are starting in the second act of a play that began without them. By the time a parent realizes the search hasn't started in earnest, the calendar has already closed certain doors. The students who graduate with strong offers almost universally started before senior year began.

2 The positioning problem: there are two versions of every student's resume, and most students are submitting the wrong one.

There is a version of a student's experience that generates interviews and a version that doesn't. Most students, and most parents who try to help, produce the second version without knowing there's a difference. A resume that reads like a job description performs like one: it clears the inbox without leaving anything to call about. The difference between the two versions is not more experience. It is entirely in how the existing experience is positioned, framed, and sequenced.

3 The accountability gap: a senior year job search is the only high-stakes project in a student's life with no professor, no due date, and no grade.

Without external structure, the search expands or contracts entirely based on how the student feels that week. When rejection comes (and it always comes), the students who have someone in their corner who isn't their parent keep moving. The ones who don't go quiet, sometimes for weeks. That difference compounds over eight months in ways that are difficult to reverse by spring.

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PATTERNS 4 - 5 The moments most families don't see coming until they're already in them

4 The interview gap: most students walk into their first real interview having practiced, but never having been coached.

They have rehearsed answers in their heads. They may have done a mock interview with a roommate or a 30-minute appointment at the career office. None of that is the same as being coached on how their specific story answers the questions their specific interviewers are actually asking. The difference between a student who has practiced and a student who has been coached shows up clearly in the room, and almost no student can name why they didn't advance when they don't. The feedback they receive, if they receive any, rarely tells them what actually happened.

5 The offer problem: most students make their first career decision under time pressure, without information, and without anyone who knows what they're looking at.

An offer arrives with a deadline. The student has never negotiated anything. They don't know if the number is market rate, whether any part of the package is flexible, or what questions are normal to ask before signing. The decision gets made in 48 to 72 hours under pressure that feels enormous, with incomplete information that feels like everything. Entry-level compensation decisions have compounding effects across the first decade of a career, and most students navigate this moment completely alone, relying on a parent whose last job search may have been twenty years ago.

These five patterns are not character flaws. They are structural gaps, in the job search process, in what college career offices can realistically provide, and in what most students know to do on their own. They are also entirely addressable with the right support at the right time. That is what the next page is about.

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WHAT TO DO WITH WHAT YOU JUST READ

If you recognized your student in any of these patterns, the next step is a conversation.

The Senior Year Readiness Diagnostic is a 60-minute session designed to assess exactly where your student stands across all five of these areas, and to end with a clear, written picture of what needs to happen and in what order. It is not a sales call. It is a professional assessment, and the plan is yours regardless of what you decide next.

BOOK A SESSION

Senior Year Readiness Diagnostic

60 minutes · Written assessment included · Applies toward full coaching package

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