

New Graduates See Lifetime of Opportunities

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by Barbara Siegel, MS, RHIT

In 1981, the year I graduated from Rockland Community College, my fellow graduates and I all expected to find jobs in hospitals or nursing homes. At that time, more than 85 percent of HIM professionals worked in traditional settings with titles such as director of medical records, transcription supervisor, or assistant director.

Today's graduates face a very different job market with opportunities that we didn't dream about 20 or even 10 years ago. Luckily, they also have a tremendous amount of resources to guide them on their path to a successful career in HIM.

Job Diversity Brings Opportunity

Today's job market for HIM professionals is more diverse than ever before. AHIMA's work force research tells us that our members are working in 120 practice settings with more than 219 job titles.¹ New member data reveals that 58 percent are working in hospitals, 13 percent in consulting/vendor services, and 9 percent in nonprovider settings.² Our members also work in a variety of HIM specialty settings, including integrated systems, rehabilitation facilities, home healthcare, and rural clinics.

More recently, HIM professionals have found their way to compliance and privacy positions and pharmaceutical companies. According to Vera Rulon, RHIT, CCS, director of records management at Pfizer Inc. in New York, NY, "HIM core practice areas... are an integral part of pharmaceutical research and industry, thereby providing a wealth of opportunity for HIM professionals."

Post Graduation To-do List

AHIMA's Web site (www.ahima.org), the Communities of Practice (CoP), and the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge are jam-packed with resources and ideas and provide a platform for networking opportunities.

Tap into CoPs in your area of interest and identify an active member and ask him or her to be your mentor. The Recent Graduates CoP contains ideas for interviewing and resume writing, as well as first-hand accounts of successful job searches. (For more about the Recent Graduates CoP, see "From Student to Privacy Officer", *Journal of AHIMA* 74:5 (May 2003))

The job bank lists positions with varying responsibilities in a wide variety of work sites, and you can also post your resume.

Also, consider volunteering at a work site that interests you or seek part-time or per diem employment. Connect with members in your state by attending local and statewide Association functions and volunteering on a committee or special project.

Many directors (including me) hire their students. Educator Nadinia Davis, MBA, RHIA, offers this advice: "Students need to understand that their dream job may be a few years away. Networking and volunteering are two important ways to help identify that dream job and develop the skills and contacts to obtain it."

Finally, make your way to Minneapolis, MN, for the 75th annual National Convention. While there, put the Job Fair on your agenda. At this event, job seekers find nationwide opportunities and employers take this opportunity to find the best and the most ambitious candidates.

Your Homework

We—recent and not-so-recent graduates—are committed to lifelong learning, promoting the profession, seeking new opportunities, and sharing our knowledge. Please add mentoring to your list of commitments. Help lead today's HIM graduates to success.

Notes

1. "Work Force Study Reveals New Picture of HIM." *AHIMA Advantage* 6, no. 8 (2002): 8-9.
2. "New Member Profile Data Reveals Rapid Growth, Expansion." *AHIMA Advantage* 7, no. 2 (2003).

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