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Five-Year Alumni Employment Survey: Class of 2009

Introduction

The Career Services Office is pleased to present the results of the second annual Five-Year Alumni Employment Survey, which represents the employment statistics for the Class of 2009 five years after graduation. This report was initiated because of the need to better understand trends in employment and post-graduation activities undertaken by ESF graduates in order to provide a more detailed picture of the career paths and directions alumni have taken. Moreover, these trends are important in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of ESF degree programs as they relate to employment, to better serve current students entering the job market, and as a tool for recruiting potential students. Ultimately, it is hoped that a better understanding of the careers and directions undertaken by alumni will allow ESF to improve and continue practices that best prepare students for positive employment outcomes following their college experience.

The Five-Year Alumni Employment Survey was administered in the following ways:

- A letter with the survey link was physically mailed on January 30, 2014 to all domestic addresses on record that had no valid email address.
- An e-mail invitation letter was sent to all compiled e-mail addresses that did not receive physical mailing on January 30, 2014.
- Notice of the survey was featured in the February 2014 edition of the Alumni Newsletter, published by the Alumni Association.
- A letter with the survey link was physically mailed on March 10, 2014 to all non-respondents.
- A survey announcement was posted to the ESF Facebook Page and the GSA's Student Association Forum Facebook Page on April 10, 2014.
- To encourage participation, all participants who filled out the survey to completion were entered into a drawing to win one of two \$50 gift certificates to the ESF College Bookstore.

Below are the summary highlights of the survey data. Please note that these statistics are representative of the 87 respondents.

Class of 2009 Respondents	Total	Associate Degree	Undergraduate Degree	Graduate Degree
Employed Full-Time	71	2	52	17
Employed Part-Time	9	0	8	1
Currently Enrolled in Continuing Education	15	0	13	2
Completed Advanced Degree(s) since 2009	42	2	22	18

# of Positions Held Since Graduation	0	1	2	3	4	5+	Total Responses
AAS Degree Recipients	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Undergraduate Recipients	1	20	13	12	7	13	66
Graduate Recipients	0	8	4	5	0	2	19
Total	1	28	17	17	8	16	87

- The overall number of associate, undergraduate, and graduate degree recipients who are currently employed and/or attending graduate school is 93.1%
- Of the total respondents, 81.6% indicated they are currently employed full-time.
- Of the total respondents, 17.4% are currently enrolled in continuing education.
- For the Class of 2009 (87 respondents), 48.3% completed one or more advanced degrees since graduation.
- Of the 42 respondents who went on to earn an advanced degree, 92.9% reported they are currently employed full-time or part-time.
- Of the total respondents who are employed full-time, 68.6% report their position is related to their major. Of those employed part-time, 66.7% report their position is related to their major.
- The median salary range for full-time positions for undergraduate respondents was \$41,000-\$50,000.
- The median salary range for full-time positions for graduate respondents was \$51,000-\$60,000.
- Of the total undergraduate respondents, 82.1% indicated their ESF education was “Absolutely Essential”, “Important” or “Necessary” for their professional success.
- Of the total graduate respondents, 78.9% indicated their ESF education was “Absolutely Essential”, “Important” or “Necessary” for their professional success.
- A complete list of full-time and part-time employers within the field of study for the Class of 2009 can be found on page 13.
- Information representing all degree recipients who identified universities they have completed an advanced degree at or are currently attending can be found on page 14.

Comparison Statistics

Category	2008	2009
Response Rate: Total	29.1%	19.9%
Overall placement (employed full-time, part-time, or attending graduate school)	94.8%	93.1%
Employed full-time	85.3%	81.6%
Continuing education	17.2%	17.4%
Full-time position related to ESF major	80.8%	68.6%
Average full-time salary (undergraduates)	\$44,126	\$41-\$50K*
Average full-time salary (graduates)	\$54,982	\$51-\$60K*
ESF education was "Absolutely Essential", "Important" or "Necessary" in their professional success (undergraduates)	96.3%	82.1%**
ESF education was "Absolutely Essential", "Important" or "Necessary" in their professional success (graduates)	93.1%	78.9%**
Completed one or more advanced degrees since graduation	25.9%	48.3%
Those who went on to complete an advanced degree that are currently employed full-time or part-time	93.3%	92.9%
Undergraduates employed in NYS (within their field of major)	50.0%	***
Graduates employed in NYS (within their field of major)	43.3%	***

* Changed to median

** Added an additional category

*** Data was not collected

Survey Administration

As an ongoing goal, the Career Services Office maintained the objective of documenting the nature and extent of barriers to communicating with alumni. Currently, the Graduating Student Survey (GSS) collects contact information from students upon graduation; however, subsequent updates to this information fall to the Alumni Association. In preparing this survey, contact information from the 2009 GSS was merged with contact information provided by the Alumni Association (the “Razor’s Edge” database) and compiled into a master database with all available contact details.

Again this year, it was apparent through the first round of letters and e-mails that many mailing addresses and e-mail addresses were out of date, inactive, or invalid. Moreover, coordination with the annual fundraising telethon was taken for granted based on last year’s collaboration, and this led to a significant communication conflict that resulted in a lack of direct phone calls in the effort to reach alumni. Given the low response rate via telephone from last year’s survey (9 of 250+ called responded by filling out a survey over the phone), the impact from this year’s lack of telephone contact is likely negligible.

Establishing Membership of the Class of 2009

A substantial difference was observed between Razor’s Edge data and the data on file in the Career Services Office from the 2009 Graduating Student Survey. There were over 200 names of individuals that were unverifiable because the names appeared on only one list or the other. Obtaining accurate information about who is included as an alumni in which class year continues to be a major challenge in administering the survey. It is recommended that future surveys establish class cohort membership ahead of time with the Office of the Registrar. Improvements in long-term tracking and contact information are also strongly recommended. Yearly follow-ups engaging alumni with the College may offer the most comprehensive potential to addressing this problem.

Physical mailing addresses

There were 436 total 2009 graduates verified across both datasets with many of them having multiple addresses on file. In an attempt to advance survey response rates, a letter was sent to each physical address that did not receive an initial email contact.

- Initial mailing addresses = 199
 - Initial attempt returned mail = 57 invalid addresses (28.6%)

Despite the high percentage of alumni who could have potentially received mailed items regarding the survey, the frequency of returned mail and the high proportion of local (Syracuse) addresses on file for graduates five years out suggests that the actual proportion of alumni who received the items was substantially smaller. Still, a full 50% of survey respondents indicated that our physical mailings prompted them to take the survey.

E-mail addresses

Similar to physical addresses, the combined contact information from Alumni Association and the 2009 GSS resulted in some having multiple e-mail addresses on file. Moreover, several students did not have any e-mail address listed in the combined dataset, indicating a challenge to be met in collecting long-term email account information from graduates. The root of this particular challenge lies in the fact that most @syr.edu e-mail addresses are deactivated approximately 6 months after the student has graduated.

Despite these challenges, email was an effective method of contact for the class of 2009, with 21% of survey respondents indicating email as the point of contact. It is worth noting that likely more than 21% of the respondents were successfully reached via email because a majority of survey respondents skipped the “how did you hear about the survey...” question, leading to unreliable data about the most effective method of contact. Anecdotally, it is possible that as many as 40% of respondents were brought to the survey via email contact, making physical mailing and email the best methods of contact.

Phone Calls

Phone calls were not a significant method of contact in this year’s Five-Year Alumni Survey. If phone sampling is desired in the future, it is strongly suggested that contact be made with the appropriate people involved in the annual telethon in the year prior to intended collaboration. Development Office staff suggest meeting as early as July the year prior to administration of the Five-Year Survey. Considerations of available labor, funding, a workable timetable, and a formal process agreement for conducting the telephone survey should be arranged well ahead of time between the Career Services Office and the Development Office.

Social Media

One of the survey objectives from last year was to attempt to incorporate social media into survey administration. For the first attempt, seven percent of survey respondents indicated that social media brought them to the survey, but the low number of respondents that indicated any particular method of contact bringing them to the survey suggests that a larger actual proportion of respondents were brought in by the use of social media. Anecdotally, the correlation between social media announcements and survey participation suggests that seven percent is lower than actual.

The Office of Communication, the Graduate Student Association, and the Career Services Office were integral to effective social media utilization. Effective collaboration between the Career Services Office and the Office of Communication resulted in a survey announcement on ESF’s Facebook Page that mirrored the advertisement that appeared in the Alumni Newsletter. The Graduate Student Association made two separate announcements on their Facebook forum for current graduates and alumni in an attempt to reach members of the Class of 2009 that might still hold membership in the GSA forum.

Conclusion

One suggestion from last year’s Five-Year Alumni Survey was to include more employment information about positions held between graduation and their currently held position. While this year’s survey did collect this information, presenting it posed serious challenges due to the extreme variability between respondents’ individual experiences. For future surveys, it would be helpful to standardize the number of previous work experiences with the goal of how best to present the data. In doing so, to identify needs will determine what is asked and how it is presented. While information about work experiences beyond the current position was collected, a range of salaries were only collected for the current position, and none prior. We collected approximate durations of previous employment, but again, the problem of how best to analyze and present this additional information remains unsolved.

For this year, the average survey respondent spent about 10 and a half minutes filling out the survey. While this is not an unreasonable burden, some respondents spent two or three times this much filling out more detailed employment histories. Further complicating reporting of

previous employment is the apparent trend of lower response rates the further back one goes. The highly inconsistent depth of detail for work experience reporting will need to be addressed in future surveys, either through simplification of work history reporting or more specific data collection. The high frequency of skipped questions throughout the survey suggests that the attention span for online survey takers is likely less than the 10.5 minute average.

For future surveys, it is suggested that social media platforms be used more extensively to support a more robust and colorful advertisement campaign in order to increase survey response rates. Dedicating more webpage space, on a temporary basis, on any related ESF web and social media pages should be a priority. Any efforts prior to administering each Five-Year Alumni Survey that help to update alumni contact information and class membership will have beneficial and compounding effects on survey administration.

The remainder of this report provides summary data for the respondents from the Class of 2009. In addition, the following lists are also provided: full-time and part-time employers within field of study, universities attended through continuing education, and advice for students. Absent from this year's report is a breakdown of department data.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

John E. Turbeville

John E. Turbeville
Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
and Director of Career Services

Five-Year Alumni Employment Survey: Class of 2009

This report is based on 87 responses (19.9% of all graduates) from December 2008, May 2009, and August 2009 degree recipients that were contacted in the spring of 2014 for a 5-year update on their professional development.

Overall Responses

<i>Respondents by Degree</i>	<i>Total Degree Recipients (2009)</i>	<i>Total 2014 Respondents</i>	<i>Respondents % of Total</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
BS Degree	281	58	20.6%	66.7%
BLA Degree	25	8	32.0%	9.2%
MS Degree	36	9	25.0%	10.3%
MLA Degree	13	1	7.7%	1.1%
MPS Degree	31	3	9.7%	3.4%
PhD Degree	16	5	31.3%	5.7%
MF Degree	2	1	50.0%	1.1%
AAS Degree	32	2	6.3%	2.3%
Total	436	87		100%

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Total Degree Recipients 2009</i>	<i>Total 2014 Respondents</i>	<i>Respondents % of Total</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Undergraduate Degrees	306	66	21.6%	75.9%
Female	129	27	20.9%	31.0%
Male	177	39	22.0%	44.8%
Graduate Degrees	98	19	19.4%	21.8%
Female	47	11	23.4%	12.6%
Male	51	8	15.7%	9.2%
AAS Degrees	32	2	6.3%	2.3%
Female	6	0	0.0%	0.0%
Male	26	2	7.7%	2.3%
Total	436	87		100%

Employment Information

AAS Degrees

<i>AAS Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Employed/Full-Time	2	100.0%
Employed/Part-Time	0	0.0%
Still Seeking Employment	0	0.0%
Unknown (did not answer the question)	0	0.0%
Total	2	100%

Undergraduate Degrees (BS & BLA)

<i>Undergraduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Employed/Full-Time	52	78.8%
Employed/Part-Time	8	12.1%
Still Seeking Employment	4	6.1%
Not Employed/Not Seeking Employment	1	1.5%
Unknown (did not answer the question)	1	1.5%
Total	66	100%

Graduate Degrees (MF, MLA, MPS, MS, PhD)

<i>Graduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Employed/Full-Time	17	89.5%
Employed/Part-Time	1	5.3%
Still Seeking Employment	1	5.3%
Unknown (did not answer the question)	0	0.0%
Total	19	100%

Number of Positions Held Since 2009 Graduation

AAS Degrees

<i>AAS Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
1 position	0	0.0%
2 positions	0	0.0%
3 positions	0	0.0%
4 positions	1	50.0%
5+ positions	1	50.0%
Total	2	100%

Undergraduate Degrees (BS & BLA)

<i>Undergraduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
0 positions	1	1.5%
1 position	20	30.3%
2 positions	13	19.7%
3 positions	12	18.2%
4 positions	7	10.6%
5+ positions	13	19.7%
Total	66	100%

Graduate Degrees (MF, MLA, MPS, MS, PhD)

<i>Graduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents (2014)</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
1 position	8	42.1%
2 positions	4	21.1%
3 positions	5	26.3%
4 positions	0	0.0%
5+ positions	2	10.5%
Total	19	100%

Position Related to ESF Major

AAS Degrees

<i>AAS Degree Recipients</i>	<i>Total Employed Respondents</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Yes, Position Is Related	1	50.0%
No, Position Is Not Related	1	50.0%
Unknown (or not currently employed)	0	0.0%
Total	2	100%

Undergraduate Degrees (BS & BLA)

<i>Undergraduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i>Total Employed Respondents</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Yes, Position Is Related	40	60.6%
No, Position Is Not Related	19	28.8%
Unknown (or not currently employed)	7	10.6%
Total	66	100%

Graduate Degrees (MF, MLA, MPS, MS, PhD)

<i>Graduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i>Total Employed Respondents</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Yes, Position Is Related	13	68.4%
No, Position Is Not Related	5	26.3%
Unknown (or not currently employed)	1	5.3%
Total	19	100%

Continuing Education Information

AAS Degrees

<i>AAS Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents</i>	<i>Responded "Yes"</i>	<i>Responded "No"</i>	<i>% of Respondents Y</i>
Completed one or more advanced degrees	2	2	0	100%
Currently enrolled	2	0	2	100%
Planning to attend in future	2	0	2	100%

Y number of respondents to specific question/by entire number of respondents answering the specific question

Undergraduate Degrees (BS & BLA)

<i>Undergraduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents</i>	<i>Responded "Yes"</i>	<i>Responded "No"</i>	<i>% of Respondents Y</i>
Completed one or more advanced degrees	65	22	43	100%
Currently enrolled	65	13	52	100%
Planning to attend in future	52	23	29	100%

Y number of respondents to specific question/by entire number of respondents answering the specific question

Graduate Degrees (MF, MLA, MPS, MS, PhD)

<i>Graduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents</i>	<i>Responded "Yes"</i>	<i>Responded "No"</i>	<i>% of Respondents Y</i>
Completed one or more advanced degrees	18	18	0	100%
Currently enrolled	19	2	17	100%
Planning to attend in future	17	3	14	100%

Y number of respondents to specific question/by entire number of respondents answering the specific question

Impact of ESF Education on Professional Success

AAS Degrees

<i>AAS Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents *</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Absolutely Essential: useful and required for employment	1	50.0%
Necessary: required for employment	0	0.0%
Important: useful but not a requirement for employment	0	0.0%
Useful: neither required nor directly helpful for employment but still valuable	1	50.0%
Not Useful: higher education has not been useful in my career path	0	0.0%
Total	2	100%

* Out of 2 respondents, 2 answered this question

Undergraduate Degrees (BS & BLA)

<i>Undergraduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents *</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Absolutely Essential: useful and required for employment	31	47.7%
Necessary: required for employment	6	9.2%
Important: useful but not a requirement for employment	17	26.2%
Useful: neither required nor directly helpful for employment but still valuable	7	10.8%
Not Useful: higher education has not been useful in my career path	4	6.2%
Total	65	100%

* Out of 66 respondents, 65 answered this question

Graduate Degrees (MF, MLA, MPS, MS, PhD)

<i>Graduate Degree Recipients</i>	<i># of Respondents *</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Absolutely Essential: useful and required for employment	9	47.4%
Necessary: required for employment	0	0.0%
Important: useful but not a requirement for employment	6	31.6%
Useful: neither required nor directly helpful for employment but still valuable	3	15.8%
Not Useful: higher education has not been useful in my career path	1	5.3%
Total	19	100%

* Out of 19 respondents, 19 answered this question

Full-Time and Part-Time Employers Within Their Field of Study

Organization	
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation
Anchor QEA	NYC DEP
Ashland Inc.	NYS DEC
Aspen Dental Management, Inc.	O'Connell Electric
CDH Energy	OCRRRA - Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Onondaga County Health Department - Medical Examiner's Office
City of Boulder	Onondaga Environmental Institute
City of Manassas Virginia	Paper mill
City of Syracuse	RockTenn Co.
Colorado State University	Sisters of Charity Hospital
Concurrent Technologies Corporation	Stantec
Conservation Services Group	Stephen Stimson Associates
Cornell University	Takshanuk Watershed Council
Davey Tree/USDA Forest Service	Ted Collins Tree & Landscape
Diamond Mountain Retreat Center	Texas A&M University
Don Grower PLS	The Davey Tree Expert Company
Dyno Nobel	The Elizabeth River Project
Egglı Landscape Contractors, Inc.	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Elijah's Promise	UCLA
Haleakala National Park	United States Environmental Protection Agency
Harford County Health Department	University of California, Riverside
Kleinschmidt Associates	University of Tennessee
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	US Forest Service
Michael Vergason Landscape Architects	USDA Forest Service
Murphy Enterprises	USDA-Agricultural Research Service-Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center
National Park Service	Utica College
NITA Group	Wildlife Conservation Society

Continuing Education

The below information represents all degree recipients who identified universities where they have completed an advanced degree at or are currently attending.

University	City	State/Country
Clarkson University	Potsdam	NY
CUNY-Hunter College	New York	NY
Emory University	Atlanta	GA
Finger Lakes Community College	Canandaigua	NY
Harvard University Graduate School of Design	Cambridge	MA
Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore	MD
Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine	Erie	PA
Luoyang Institute of Technology	Henan	China
Marist College	Poughkeepsie	NY
Northeastern University	Boston	MA
Onondaga Community College	Syracuse	NY
Pace Law School	White Plains	NY
Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing	NYC	NY
PUCMM-ISA	Santiago	Dominican Republic
Queen's University	Kingston	Canada
Rutgers University	New Brunswick	NY
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania	Slippery Rock	PA
SUNY Alfred State College School of Technology	Alfred	NY
SUNY Cortland	Cortland	NY
SUNY-ESF	Syracuse	NY
Syracuse University	Syracuse	NY
Texas A&M University	College Station	TX
The Evergreen State College	Olympia	WA
Tokyo City University	Tokyo	Japan
University at Albany	Albany	NY
University of Maryland School of Law	Baltimore	MD
University of Vermont	Burlington	VT
Virginia Tech	Blacksburg	VA
William and Mary-Virginia Institute of Marine Science	Gloucester Point	VA
Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies	New Haven	CT
Zhejiang University	Hangzhou	China

Advice From Alumni

48 credits goes by faster than you think. Take the experience seriously and glean all the knowledge you can from your professors and peers.

Actually check what your major is designed to do for you and if it's what you want. Have fun and gain all the experience and knowledge you can!

Apply to companies directly, rather than going through an employment search engine. Make lists of the companies that you admire and would like to work for, and then be proactive in checking their websites frequently (even daily) to directly apply to postings as they arise. Also consider volunteering as much as you can for a company you'd like to work for, to get your foot in the door and make contacts. Try things that are outside of your comfort zone. Savor your time at ESF, as it goes too quickly. Even when you come back to visit as an alum, it isn't the same experience because you aren't with the exact same people during the exact same time that you were there. To that end, make sure you get your friend's contact information before graduation!

As an undergraduate, try to narrow down your potential career path/interests by your junior year. This will help to focus your electives and academic curriculum towards the subject matter that will be most beneficial to you outside of college or in the continuation of your education.

Ask questions - your professors are some of the best in your field and know way more than you will ever hope to. Take advantage of the opportunity to explore new ideas with them.

Attend professional conferences, network, and don't be afraid to contact people you haven't seen or heard from in a while

Become involved with as many extra- curricular activities as possible. Apply for summer internships in your field early in the spring semester.

Concentrate on your work and stay away from all the drugs.

Connect with faculty and staff in ESF offices. Ask around for jobs, assistantships, fellowships. Maintain an active job search in the last year or two of your degree, so that you might find interested recruiters in time to hire you just after graduation. Network, talk to people IN PERSON, leave telephone messages, etc. Go to conferences if you can afford it; many of them offer lower student rates.

Do an internship first.

Do an internship!

Do internships during college.

Do internships, meet people, network.

Do not wait for your choice & start wherever you get a chance. You always have option in future to pick and choose after having some work experience.

Do research on your desired field. ESF has a wide spectrum of career choices but there is not market for all of them.

Do something related to your major EVERY summer and winter break if possible = resume building.

Don't be afraid to ask for help from students, faculty, and staff.

Don't be too proud to take a job at the bottom and work your way up.

ESF has so many connections and opportunities to work for different labs or internships. Never spend a break sitting in your hometown, take the opportunity to travel, learn, and build up your resume. Those connections will help you land your dream job. Also, the professors at ESF offer a wealth of knowledge you can't get from the internet. Talk to them!

Explore what you want to learn about and take initiative to have out of school experiences that make you learn about what you want to get out of the few years you have at ESF!

Focus on a niche skill and specialize

Focus on practical experiences, get involved in the wider Syracuse community, and know that things will change greatly in 5 years so bone up on life skills and practical admin and field skills that might translate to a variety of jobs.

Gain as much office experience as possible through internships.

Gain professional experience through involvement in organizations pertaining to your particular career field (i.e. The Wildlife Society). Internships and volunteer work are critical. They provide you with skills and invaluable experience this allows you to prove to prospective employers that you can do the work required. Think broad scope. Conducting research is rewarding whether it be studying Kodiak Brown Bears or Forest Pathogens. Don't be afraid to broaden your skills and understanding of natural systems. Take classes in other fields of study. Most of wildlife management is people management. Communications, interpretation, forestry, outdoor recreation management these are all factors in the world of wildlife management that students should at least be familiar with.
Get as much experience as you possibly can. And for anyone going into Natural Resources Management, really, really, really pay attention to what you learn in GIS courses!
Get as much real world experience as possible.
Get involved outside of class, especially working in professor's labs to gain hands-on experience
Get involved. Field trips.
Get to know your professors and ask them if it ok to stay in contact with them after you graduate
Get to know your professors on a more person level- they can help you build networking opportunities. So much of finding a job is who you know and how to know them. Professors pose a wealth of knowledge not only in their subject but with those who share the same interests and have the ability to hire. Also- take advantage of internship opportunities.
Go to vocational school. Learn a trade.
Have a clear idea of what career you want to have and stay focused on this idea when choosing your coursework
Have an idea of what you want to do when you're done and what that job requires. Many environmental jobs require experience in the field. Take advantage of what ESF has to offer and also find other opportunities to volunteer.
Have fun during your time in college, but balance that with hard work and locating a great internship or other resume builders.
I can only speak for the path I've taken, which is in research. Thus the key is to get as much research experience possible in the field you are likely to pursue. Even if you can't find paid positions, then volunteer. Learn the fundamental skills necessary to do research in that area. Take classes that will give you breadth of knowledge but also those that will add to your toolbox (e.g., stats, GIS, etc.)
I have had no luck actually finding a job in my field. Having a major in science is a catch 22. I've had calls from several places saying that I have a great education but no experience even for entry level positions. Also my internship doesn't count as work experience since I didn't get paid. Basically find a job that is a form of apprenticeship or something that you do and learn from not just education from a book.
I wish I took greater advantage of the knowledge of my professors. I wish I would have been less shy and gotten to know them better.
If they are serious about getting a long term position in the field in which they are studying, it would be a good idea to go for a higher degree, such as M.S. or PhD.
If you are in a program with few available jobs, get an MPS from BPE and get a job.
Work hard and make lots of friends while at ESF!
If you want a job out of college make sure to research the job sector you want to enter and pick a major that qualifies you and gain as much experience in the field as possible while in college
Important to focus on a major that has practical skills; to be prepared to actually do something instead of knowing information; I felt my degree prepared me for grad school or some other line of work; other degrees seemed more transferrable.
Internships are key to finding a position post-graduation.
Internships help with direct employment. Undergraduate research helps with an advanced degree, discovery, or patent development.
It's a cliché, but take advantage of as many opportunities as you can while you're at ESF.
It's really hard to find a job when you're done with school so start looking early
Know what types of careers are in the environmental field and what level of experience, work and degree they require.

Learn how to communicate and manage time. The rest you can learn on the job.
Make a good network through academic communities.
Make friends and maintain connections within the wildlife/science networks.... they will be invaluable in the future.
Minor in another degree if your passion / curiosity is there.
Network-Network-Network. Spend as much time as possible talking to other professors, making good relationships with professors, getting research/ work experience. Go to conferences and meet other people your age, and their professors. Research, work experience, and who you know (and how well they know you) count far more than grades. Learn how to read a paper, learn how to formulate and ask thoughtful questions. Give your peers a hard time, because if they can't handle a hard time from you (education wise) then how are they going to handle people who are not their peers giving them a hard time?
Network, network, network! In addition to the people that your worked/interned/TA'd for also make contact with the person on the plane or train who works at some corporation. Those contacts may prove fruitful in the end! Also ensure that you have your plans A, B and C. If what you first hoped for does not look like it may pan out you will have had your other pots cooking on the stove (on simmer).
Network. Get experience by volunteering as much as possible. Use your classes to also learn about yourself.
Networking is extremely important while at ESF; assisting graduate students with research project, conducting internships is extremely valuable.
Never think you are only going to get one kind of job. Keep your options open, ALWAYS! It is not what you know that always counts the most. Each job will train you so you do not need to know everything. The best skills that have helped me get a job is being professional, hardworking, a team player and organized. Companies will now take an average person over a Harvard graduate if they can deal with people better and have the skills to become a great team player as well as a leader.
Pay very close attention to career opportunity trends (increase vs. decline) or stability of demand/growth. Be prepared to leave CNY if steady work is what you seek. Sorry, that's my current take on the situation.
Scope out the employable job market, get a good internship lined up and take dead serious, don't narrow your degree beyond what the job market offers
Set your goals high. Help your friends discover their passion in life, so yours will come back to you naturally. Aside from the career choices you make, you'll be doing what you love, even though sometimes it's outside of work.
Start internships early, the summer between freshman and sophomore year.
Stay in contact with your professors, take advantage of the courses offered at Syracuse, and a sense of the actual daily life of a professional in the career your want to go into in order to tailor the courses to take to meet the skills you need
Take a variety of courses that provide technical skills - especially those things that may seem out of your comfort zone.
Take a wide range of classes and if you feel you'll go into the non-profit sector, seek out a grant writing class!
Take advantage of all of the great courses offered.
Take advantage of as many internships and real working experience.
Take advantage of the class variety, get to know your professors (not doing this is my biggest regret,) take advantage of all the grad students looking for interns for their projects.
Take all the diverse electives you can.
Take an internship related to the area of interest if possible before the completion of the graduate/undergraduate program
Take as many industry-specific internships as possible. Even after only your freshman year.
Take as many non-major courses available. Use electives to study business, writing, or courses requiring analytical reasoning.
Take lots of science courses!
Take summer internships seriously. Find an organization/business that you want to work for and reach out to them, even if they aren't actively advertising for internships.

Take their time, don't rush your studies and enjoy ESF to their fullest. They have a lot to offer.

Take time to think of what you'd like to do not only in 5 years, but 30 years towards the end of your career.

Two simple words. "Get involved"

What a big question! First, enjoy your time at ESF and make sure to explore everything available- this time will end sooner than you know. To prepare for a career, make connections and learn how to network as early as possible. Who you know and who knows you matters more than we all would like to admit.