

New grad tips



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May brought another round of talented graduates across the stage to receive their University of Kentucky diplomas. Each year over 6,700 students graduate from UK. They are eager for the next phase of their lives. We turned to our UK alumni to share words of encouragement and advice: What gems do you wish someone would have shared with you as a new graduate?

Mary Shelton, agriculture and food industry thought leader, suggested that graduates, “Play to your strengths, be open to new opportunities and proactively make decisions about your life rather than being swept along by the crowd. A successful and fulfilling life is determined not by the destination, but by the quality of the journey. Life is a process of discovery. It is important to be proactive in the process, recognizing decision points and making deliberate choices. Success is up to you.”

Jeff Ashley, founder and senior consultant with Ashley Rountree and Associates, philanthropy consultants, recommended the following: “UK prepared me in a lot of ways for my career, but probably not in ways that I fully realized until many years later. At first, I thought that my degree, my GPA and my ‘experience’ would be the most important things to discuss and highlight — and no doubt they were critically important, but I quickly found that additional skill sets and attributes were just as, and sometimes even more, important.

“The simple ability to communicate clearly and effectively is an asset that I probably under-estimated initially in terms of importance. But I had those skills, and they were honed by my time in class, interacting with faculty and other students, and engaging in other extracurricular activities offered at UK that I was able to take advantage of.

“The understanding of the impact of personal relationships formed at UK and made available through the broad and deep network of alumni was incredibly impactful. In one of my first interviews, about 80 percent of the time was spent talking with the interviewer about his time at UK — we had a connection, a built-in relationship that I didn’t fully realize would be an asset for me. I ended up getting that job, by the way.”

Will Nash, executive director of New Site Development for New Leaders, a New York-based education nonprofit focused on principal and teacher professional development, recently served with a panel of alumni for the UK Alumni Association’s student mentoring 3D (Dine, Discover and Decide) event. He encouraged students who attended to, “Get comfortable shaking hands with people, looking them in the eye and networking. Say yes to opportunities while you have the chance to build your career. Additionally, there is a positive correlation between humility and success. The more humility you have, the more success you will have.”

UK Alumni Association members are eligible for two complimentary appointments per year with an alumni career counselor. Call 1-888-9UK-CATS (852287) to schedule an appointment. Visit www.ukalumni.net/career to learn more about resume critiques, virtual networking events and other Alumni Career Services. To post a job opening, employers may visit www.ukalumni.net/employers.