

# From the Sidelines



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## Job outlook for recent turf grads

**T**he latest numbers show 15 million Americans are unemployed, which can't be too encouraging to recent college graduates seeking a full-time job in their field of study. But turfgrass students seem to be ahead of those numbers, according to some folks close to the action:

"Graduates pursuing a career in sports turf seem to be faring better than the nationwide average of two out of 10 graduates having jobs," STMA CEO Kim Heck writes in an email. She cites STMA's Career Center as evidence. "There has not been any decline in the number of job openings posted and internships offered from previous years on our website."

Heck also attributes the scope of the industry as a positive factor for employment. "Our members work for parks and recreation departments, professional and semi-professional sports, K-12 facilities, colleges and universities, and for commercial companies—more variety should offer more opportunities." She also believes that new graduates are attractive to employers, but persistence is key.

"Employers are very busy and new graduates need to make certain their qualifications get noticed. Motivated, enthusiastic and technically savvy graduates will make great employees," she wrote.

Dr. Andy McNitt of Penn State said, "The entry-level job market for turfgrass science students remains strong. We graduated more than 50 students in turfgrass science this year and to my knowledge everyone who wanted a position and was willing to relocate secured a position without great difficulty. Most had a job arranged well before they graduated."

"Many of these were in the golf industry but a percentage was in sports turf as well. It seems as though the entry-level position in sports turf has expanded a bit or it could be that the industry is doing a better job of networking and communicating about open positions. I credit STMA with improving that communication."

"Certainly, the industry has seen a slowdown in upward mobility recently but everyone is hopeful that this slowdown is temporary and will improve with an improving economy. The good news is that our recent graduates did not find it too difficult to find gainful employment in the turfgrass industry."

The final word comes from Pamela Sherratt, Ohio State sports turf extension specialist and STMA Board member. Her message is an important one.

"Now more than ever, graduates looking for a job need to set themselves apart from the pack. Not just with their turf knowledge but with their personality, their passion for the industry and their willingness to be flexible and deal with whatever comes up. At the end of the day, employers are looking for people that are pleasant to work with and take things in stride."

"In addition to their turf knowledge, graduates really need to work on their portfolio and show future employers that they have a passion for the sports turf industry, a willingness to try new things and have a team mentality. All of these 'extra' things help set you apart from the pack."

"Graduates need to be aware that turf management is a small and very tight-knit industry. The old adage 'treat others as you wish to be treated' and 'don't burn bridges' never go out of fashion."

# SportsTurf

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The Official Publication Of The Sports Turf  
Managers Association

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SportsTurf (ISSN 1061-687X) (USPS 000-292) (Reg. U.S. Pat. & T.M. Off.) is published monthly by m2media360, a Bev-Al Communications company at 1030 W. Higgins Road, Suite 230, Park Ridge, IL 60068. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sportsturf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie IL 60076-7820. For subscription information and requests, call Subscription Services at (847) 763-9565. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$40 US & Poss.; 2 years, \$65 US & Poss.; 1 year, \$65 Canada/Foreign Surface, 1 year, \$130 Airmail. All subscriptions are payable in advance in US funds. Send payments to Sportsturf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie, IL 60076-7820. Phone: (847) 763-9565. Fax: (847) 763-9569. Single copies or back issues, \$8 each US/Canada; \$12 Foreign. Periodicals postage paid at Park Ridge, IL and additional mailing offices. COPYRIGHT 2010, SportsTurf. Material may not be reproduced or photocopied in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

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