

RIVIER SENIOR READY FOR TOUGH JOB MARKET, PROUD TO BE FIRST COLLEGE GRADUATE IN FAMILY

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Cameron Kittle, The Telegraph, Nashua, NH



Photo © by Don Himsel: Jonathan Green is graduating from Rivier College in Nashua, NH.

For four years at Rivier College in Nashua, John Green saved up his \$10-an-hour, part-time wages to meet \$1,000 monthly payments. He lived at home, walked to school and skipped nights out to write papers and polish off business presentations.

On Saturday, the effort pays off. Green will be the first in his family to graduate from college, a “big personal achievement,” he said. He’ll wear the traditional cap and gown, step up to the podium and accept a bachelor’s degree in business management.

Then he’ll walk away with \$40,000 in debt and few full-time job prospects.

“I guess that’s probably decent, compared to some other students,” Green said. “I can’t complain too much.”

Why complain when you’re not alone? Half of the country’s young college graduates are now jobless or underemployed and carrying an average of \$24,000 in student loan debt, according to reports by The Associated Press and The Project on Student Debt.

But where many see problems, Green sees opportunity.

“Everyone’s saying how tough it’s going to be, but I’m not worried at all,” he said. “I’m ready for it. With a business management degree, there’s a whole range of fields you can go into.”

Green has his sights set on retail management, at least in the short term. He works part time at Best Buy in south Nashua and hopes to go full time after graduation. He doesn’t see it as a dead-end job but rather something that could help prepare him for a career.

“I’m not trying to stay a sales associate,” he said. “I’d like to do a supervisor job. I like being able to see something and have the ability to change it. I don’t mind taking responsibility or stepping up for tasks.”

Green graduated from Nashua High School South and attended Elm Street Middle School and Sunset Heights Elementary School while growing up in the city. He chose Rivier because it was close to home, just five houses down the street.

He admits to slacking off in high school, calling his grades “mediocre” and adding that he didn’t participate in a lot of extracurricular activities. That mindset changed when he looked toward college.

“I didn’t want to be the same as my parents or anyone else before me,” he said. “I figured they could only go so far without a college degree, and today it’s even more necessary.”

At school, he juggled part-time jobs and business classes. He joined the Student Business Club early on and was named president during his junior year.

The club was more formal when he started – it required business clothes and had strict speaking rules at meetings – but Green took it down a notch. He changed the name from Business Student Association to Student Business Club, tossed out the old regulations, and let students offer ideas and

come to meetings in whatever clothes they wanted. In the end, more students joined the group and spoke up more often.

“It was a big improvement,” Green said. “I figured if we had things less formal, we’d get more people involved.”

He organized club trips to New York City, Boston, Washington D.C., and Rhode Island, among others. He and about 10 other classmates had to find hotels, transportation and plan the events from start to finish. In each city, the group participated in business competitions against colleges around the country.

“Having clubs on campus was a highlight,” he said. “It made college a little more worth it, being able to travel a lot.”

Professor Gregory Kivenzor, who had Green as a student in three of his business classes, said Green is “always willing to go an extra mile,” reaching beyond good grades and being active in the classroom.

Kivenzor cited Green’s leadership of the Student Business Club, on top of his job at Best Buy outside school, as evidence of his dedication and hard work.

“He is always coming up with ideas and new activities,” Kivenzor said, in an email. “He is always prepared and willing to contribute to a discussion. It was a pleasure having him as a student in three of my classes.”

Green said he’s ecstatic to graduate, but his family is especially excited for Saturday. Green said his oldest grandmother wants to find a way there, and his parents, Harry and Debbie, are very proud.

“My mom’s real anxious for that day to come,” he said.

Green said he’s not worried about the future. He’d like to find full-time work, begin to pay off his loans and maybe pursue a master’s degree in a few years. Green said the road to graduation was long and stressful at times, but he never questioned the value of his experience.

“It’s definitely still worth it to go to college,” he said. “Jobs require it now.” ■

* Retrieved November 20, 2012, from <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/960242-196/rivier-senior-ready-for-tough-job-market.html>