Graduating This Spring? Congrats! Now What?

Earning your degree is the first step towards a successful career in HIM. But what comes next? To find out more about life after graduation, SAC member Sebrina Campbell recently interviewed Jamie Wilding, a coding and compliance specialist for Esse Health. Wilding is a new professional who graduated from Saint Louis University in 2010 with her BS in Health Information Management.

What attracted you to the HIM profession?

I was in the process of a change in study, and trying to figure out what profession I could get into that would keep me on my toes and happy for the rest of my professional career. When researching various professions, I found myself immediately attracted to the HIM profession when I asked myself this question: what am I passionate about? The answer: healthcare and business! The endless opportunities and the ongoing growth and development in the HIM profession are truly amazing—the sky is the limit!

How long did it take you to find a position after you graduated?

After graduating with a Bachelor's of Science in Health Information Management, I immediately began the job search, and all of three to four weeks after graduation, I landed a great job.

Did your education prepare you for your current position?

It certainly did. By job description, I am a coding and compliance specialist. However, the growing knowledge of health information management has led employers to understand all that we are capable of. I was able to step “outside” the box, and given the opportunity to assist in the successful implementation of an interoperable electronic health record (EHR) as a super user. I also play a role in development and upkeep of various educational and department materials, as well as statistical development, data display, and much more!

Did you sit for the RHIA exam? What would you recommend for other recent graduates?

Yes I did. My recommendation comes from a previous HIM professor, and probably the most important piece of advice I’ve received to date—BREATHE! You only have to do this ONE time. This means buckle down, study your little heart out, and focus. Something I did which I found quite helpful: take the questions in the exam prep books one step further. This means studying the other terms offered in the multiple choice options, or reviewing items similar to the topic related to a certain question. For example, if the question asks about a specific filing type, research the other filing types as well. Make sure you utilize your professors too; after all, they are there to help and see you achieve all goals to your fullest potential.

Do you have any advice for current HIM students or recent graduates?
The best advice I can give—never cut yourself short and always push for greatness! When I first graduated and began the job search, I was looking into positions that I was over-qualified for. Guess what, HIM is a strong, growing field—healthcare facilities know who we are and the outstanding skill set, knowledge, and value we can bring to the table. Also, when you graduate and begin the job search, always continue to educate yourself and stay involved. I promise that everything will pay off in the end!

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