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Young, and Training for a Good Job -- at Sea

This is the VOA Special English Education Report.

Many new college graduates in the United States have trouble finding a job in the weak economy. But not graduates from the California Maritime Academy.

The academy is the only school of its kind on the West Coast. Students attend classes on the university campus in northern California. But they also gain experience by going to sea in a floating classroom, the training ship Golden Bear.

Two hundred eighty-eight cadets recently sailed on a two-month international training cruise. The ship travels south to the Panama Canal. Along the way, it visits countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

Vasile Tudoran is a mechanical engineering student at the California Maritime Academy.

He spends much of his time working deep in the heart of the ship.

VASILE TUDORAN: "I knew I wanted to fix stuff since I was a little kid."

He says he is not worried about finding a job.

VASILE TUDORAN: "When we get out of school you are basically guaranteed a job. There are not enough bodies for the positions that are needed to be filled."

Robert Jackson is one of his teachers.

ROBERT JACKSON: "I would say the majority of our students have between one to two job offers before they graduate."

He says most of those job offers are between sixty and one hundred twenty thousand dollars a year. In addition to working on ships, he says, engineering graduates from the academy also get jobs with power companies and satellite companies.

Instructor Bill Schmid says the situation for marine transportation students is not as bright as it was before the economic downturn, but it is recovering.

BILL SCHMID: "I think probably the vast majority of our graduates are employed in the industry, if they want to be, now."

He says the coursework is demanding because ship's officers are kind of like surgeons or airplane pilots.

BILL SCHMID: "You do not want them to be right only seventy percent of the time. We pretty much have to be right all the time, so that is a hard thing to teach young people, that there is zero tolerance for mistakes."

The California Maritime Academy has a ninety-four percent job placement rate. Still, only about nine hundred students are currently studying there. Cadet Andrew Di Tucci says he understands why.

ANDREW DI TUCCI: "The school, it is not like your normal college experience would be. We are a paramilitary school. We have uniforms. We have formations. Just disciplining yourself to show up and keep grooming standards and be where you need to be, sit down, buckle your belt and study."

Andrew Di Tucci is majoring in marine transportation. He says when he was growing up, he was always told it takes a special person to want to go to sea for a living.

ANDREW DI TUCCI: "My favorite thing about it is waking up every morning and seeing nothing but the ocean on all sides of you. I get a thrill out of that."

And that's the VOA Special English Education Report. To read and listen to more programs for people learning English, go to voaspecialenglish.com. We have a video about the California Maritime Academy. You can also find our captioned videos at the VOA Learning English Channel on YouTube. I'm Jim Tedder.

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