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DELBARTON PREVAILS AT MORRIS COUNTY TOURNAMENT SPORTS B1

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DEBT and DESTINY

ADVANCED DEGREES OPEN DOORS

Professionals believe high price tags worth the sacrifice

By Lorraine Ash
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In the great scramble to land a decent job, Americans are willing more than ever to pay big bucks for an advanced degree that will give them an edge.

The bucks are, in fact, very big. A master of arts degree costs \$59,000 and a master of education \$51,000, according to a March 2014 report by the New American Education Policy Program. Meanwhile, a law degree costs a whopping \$141,000 and a medical degree, \$162,000.

It's no wonder, then, that students seeking graduate or professional degrees have taken out \$480 billion in student loans — 40 percent of the overall \$1.2 trillion student debt load, according to the report, which also shows such debt gained momentum since the recession struck in 2008.

Student loan debt is so high that it has exceeded auto loan debt, now at \$806 billion, and credit card debt, now at \$690 billion, according to fourth quarter 2013 figures released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The merging of trends — more education, more borrowing — has created a mixed mood among Morris County graduates with master's and professional degrees who've been forced to put their dreams and aspirations on a balance sheet.

Yet, amid the frustration of mega debt, three remain fundamentally optimistic about their futures and, experts say, they have good reason to feel as they do.

Amos Sanchez, a 27-year-old MBA candidate at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Silberman College of Business, says his master's degree is setting him back another \$40,000 in federal Stafford loans. His total federal loan debt, including the expense of his biomedical engineering degree from Rutgers University, is \$80,000.

Yet, Sanchez is chipper about his double investment because he thinks the combination of an engineering and a business degrees is dynamite. Enrolling in the MBA program already paid off, he said. In 2010, right after graduating Rutgers, he landed his first entry-level researcher job.

"I loved the company, but I felt clerical and unchallenged," he said. "In the spring and summer of 2012, I spent five months job hunting with just my bachelor's degree. I wasn't any getting any calls back from re-

"Even today on LinkedIn, I get a lot of job solicitations, and I'm not even looking."

AMOS SANCHEZ



Amos Sanchez, 27, an MBA candidate at Fairleigh Dickinson University who will graduate next month, took on an additional \$40,000 to get his degree. But, he said, it has already worked in his favor. BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

IS IT WORTH IT?

What's the value of your college major with and without a graduate degree? Check out "What's It Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors," a report by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, at <http://cew.georgetown.edu/whatsitworth>.

See DEBT, Page A4

Boonton's 'Infomercial Queen' reigns



Producer and assistant director Dana Conklin (left) of Montville gets ready to film a scene with Collette Liantonio, president and creative director of Concepts TV Productions in Boonton. Liantonio has filmed more than 3,000 infomercials. BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Denville lake, Rockaway Mall the settings for her latest shoot

By Michael Izzo
@MizzoDR

DENVILLE — This wasn't Collette Liantonio's first infomercial shoot. Far from it.

Liantonio, 63, has been called the "Infomercial Queen." With her 14 employee Boonton-based company, Concepts TV Productions, she's filmed more than 3,000 infomercials over a 30-year period.

"If you're staying up late, you've seen my stuff. I do more two-minute infomercials than anyone in the industry," Liantonio said, whose ads typically run in half-hour or two-minute format.

"Half-hour infomercials are more like telling a story. Short-form commercials are like poems. Every action means something."

See QUEEN, Page A2

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