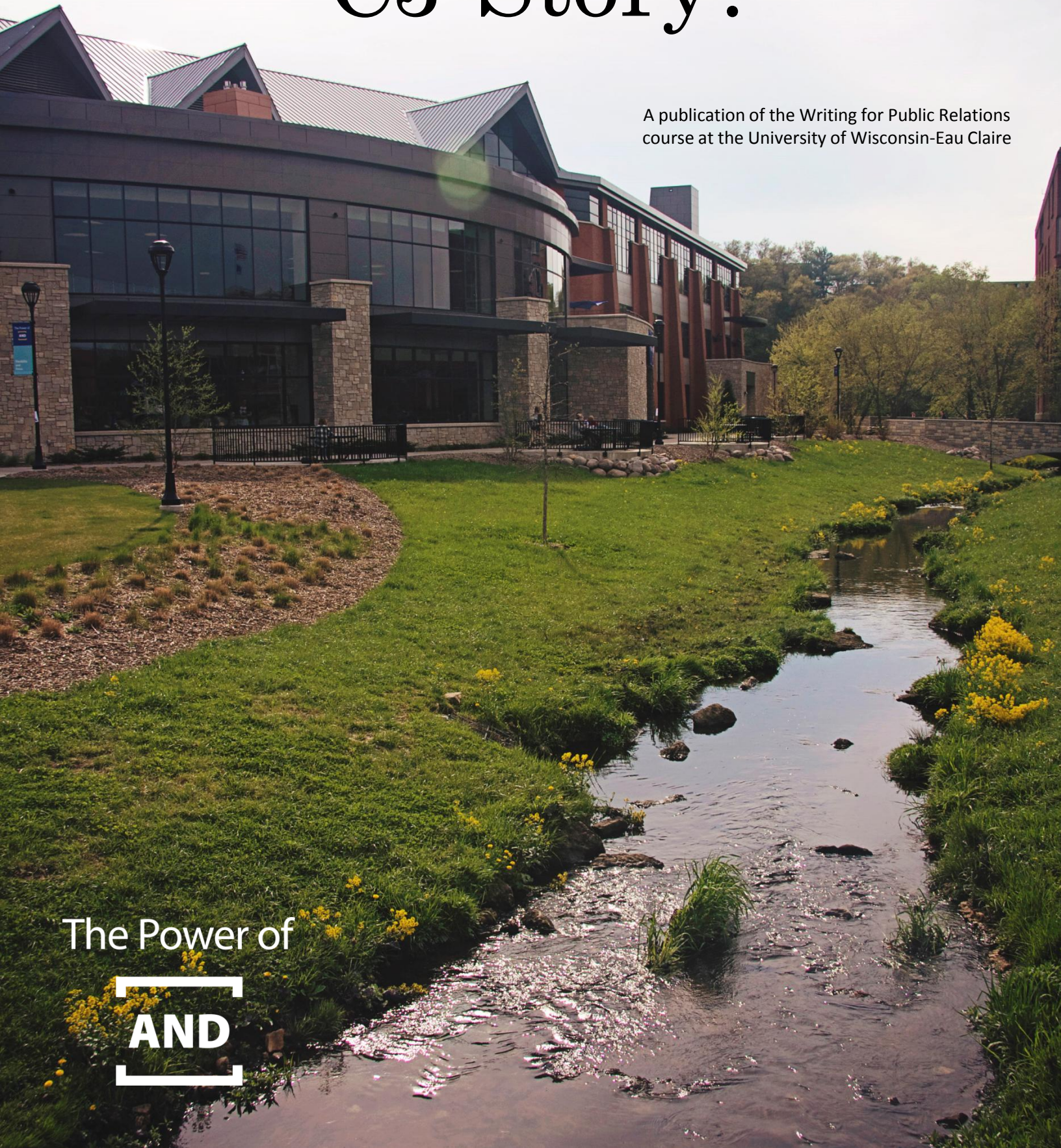


What's Your CJ Story?

A publication of the Writing for Public Relations
course at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

The Power of

AND



Looking Back and Looking Forward

My Thoughts on 36 Years in the CJ Department

When I began as a faculty member at UW-Eau Claire in 1979, there were no computers in classrooms, students took notes from lectures delivered via overhead transparencies, and the only things “tweeting” were the birds in the trees that lined the Chippewa River. Things have surely changed since then, and one thing I have loved about being here almost four decades is that the department of communication and journalism has changed with the evolving times.

This fall marks another key change in the department, as the Mass Communication major transitions into Integrated Strategic Communication. While emphases in public relations and advertising will remain, these two tracks will converge in more places than they will be separate. This new integration will ensure that students with ISC degrees have the combined skills in multimedia, advertising and public relations that employers are seeking in new employees.

After teaching roughly 7,200 students, my story here is nearing completion - but there are still a lot of stories waiting to be told. Our alumni are evidence that there are no bounds to the career paths a CJ major can take you. As you page through this publication, it is hard not to be inspired by their stories and see the value that core communication skills continue to hold, even in this ever-changing society.

Please enjoy these stories of our alumni. We hope you will one day share yours too.

Terrence Chmielewski, Ph.D.
Professor
Integrated Strategic Communication



Do **YOU** have a CJ story you would like told?

Want to be featured in the next issue?

Contact Dr. Evan Perrault
perrault@uwec.edu

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

The Power of

Communication **AND** Journalism

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Table of Contents

Alumni Featured	Page #
Meghan Dade	4
Joshua Hepp	5
Jessica Witt	6
Katie Cyrus	7
Shari Lau	8
Chelsey Quine	9
Natalie Judd	10
Chelsea Timmers	11
Amy Schmidt	12
Amanda Hornick	13
Ricki Lowe	14
Joanie Foster	15
Tessa Krieger	16
Taylor Schult	17
Britni Welsh	18
Tara Montgomery	19
Andrea Schmidt	20
Abby Richards	21
Eric Larson	22
Megan Evans	23
Fiona Charlton	24
Rachel Schultz	25
Daniel Coughlin	26
Emily Fiedler	27
Sarah Hanson	28

Meghan Dade

Class of 2011



Communications Coordinator
Franklin Public Schools
Franklin, WI



FRANKLIN – As college students we always hear about how important it is to get experience before applying for jobs. But is it all worth it? According to alumna Meghan Dade, it can make all the difference. In college, Meghan worked two to three jobs at once - one to financially help her support herself, and one or two others to gain experience in her field. Before graduating, she interned with Wisconsin Public Radio, the Eau Claire Regional Arts Center, and the Red Cross. After graduating in May of 2011, Meghan started her career as the Communications Coordinator for the Franklin Public Schools and has been there ever since.

What were your major and minor at UW-Eau Claire?

My official major was in entrepreneurial business management, but I minored in public relations. It was actually my business writing class that helped me discover where my strengths were, and solidified the direction I needed to go in, which lead me to the career I am in now. That's the nice thing about a degree in communications or business, is that it's applicable in every realm and profession.

What type of job did you see yourself going into after graduation?

Before I graduated I applied for many communications jobs in different areas: publishing, manufacturing, healthcare, and marketing. I was surprised to learn that a position like this was available in the field of education.

What is your official job title, and what responsibilities are included in your position?

I am the Communications Coordinator for the Franklin Public Schools. In my position I am responsible for our district website content, our social media presence, relations with local media, coordinating the design of district-wide publications, and assisting communications efforts across all areas of our district. I also serve as the administrative assistant to the district administrator, which involves doing some event planning, budgeting, and accounting.

Name three skills that you gained at UW-Eau Claire that you feel you use most in the “real world”

PR writing and business writing. I took both of those classes in school and use them every single day. Also data analysis, being able to take something complicated, like survey data, and presenting it to other people in a way that makes it simple and easy to understand is really important. The communications department was also really helpful in learning how to use different types of software and social media that almost all communications professionals use.

Knowing what you do now, if you could go back and change anything, what would it be?

If I were to do it all over again, I would have loved to have a major in public relations, but I didn't discover it until I was halfway through my college career. It would have been nice to start there, but I think I have a good set of experiences to draw from because I was in two separate departments.

What advice do you have for future UW-Eau Claire students?

In college you have those classes where you feel like, “Why am I even here? I will never use any of this.” There are things in those classes that you will use on a daily basis, so hang in there because it does matter at the

end of the day. Also make sure you take advantage of as many opportunities as you can outside of campus to make sure you have real work experience. Honestly, that's what made the difference between having the job I do now, and being unemployed after graduation. So, take advantage of the things like job fairs and student organizations that are available. Take advantage of them while they're there and it's provided for you. Remember to enjoy the process, and know that it is a process.

“If I were to do it all over again, I would have loved to have a major in public relations, but I didn't discover it until I was halfway through my college career.”

Written By: Sara Axness
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Joshua Hepp

Class of 2011



**Regional Sales Executive, Midwest
Contiki Vacations
Chicago, IL**



CHICAGO - From the Czech Republic to Chicago, Joshua Hepp is going places, and it all started in Eau Claire. Since graduating from the public relations program at UW-Eau Claire in 2011, Hepp has applied his degree all over the world. He started out as an English teacher in his travels abroad and then came back to the United States. He now works at Contiki Vacations, a company that promotes traveling and plans trips around the world for 18 to 35 year olds. Hepp manages all local sales and marketing in the Midwest, enabling him to travel and test out many of the trips his company organizes. Even though he now has a home base, Hepp still experiences the adventure he craves.

What made you choose a career in vacation planning?

I have always had a passion for traveling, so it just kind of happened after going to UW-Eau Claire. I was in an organization called AIESEC, which focuses on connecting young people to international internships. I did one of those internships in the Czech Republic after I graduated, which made me fall in love with traveling. After that, I worked with STA Travel for a few years, and then I happened to fall into the job that I currently have.

What is the most exciting part of your job?

The most exciting part is definitely traveling. For instance, this summer I get to go on a few different trips. In May, I'm going on a camping trip from Paris to Rome. In June, I'm going to Thailand, Cambodia and Laos for another trip, which I am really looking forward to. And then in August, I get to go to Costa Rica. There are some pretty cool opportunities with my job because I get to experience a lot of cultures and meet some really unique people from all over the world, which is awesome.

"There are some pretty cool opportunities with my job because I get to experience a lot of cultures and meet some really unique people from all over the world, which is awesome."

Why did you choose to be a mass communication major?

I liked the versatility it gave me. I enjoyed the classes that I was able to take, and I really liked the professors and people who were in the program, which, in my eyes, really makes or breaks a program. I was a business major for a while, and I just didn't like that there weren't a lot of hands-on experiences. With mass communication, I was able to do a lot of hands-on work. I was able to put events together for classes and work on some interesting portfolio pieces.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

UW-Eau Claire pushed me to go off and try new things. I was active in student life and in different student organizations. I think the thought of stepping out of your comfort zone to try new things and gain new experiences helped me get where I am today.

How do you balance your work and your personal life?

Every week I am usually travelling for at least three to four days, so it can get difficult to balance a work-life relationship. I usually work from home two days a week, and then try to go out with friends and family on the weekends. Sometimes finding a balance is a real struggle because of all of the traveling that I do for work, but I love what I do, and I wouldn't change it.

What advice can you give to students?

Make sure that you are versatile because there are a lot of different types of public relations that you may not think of, whether it is travel, hospitality or sports. Just make sure you are open to whatever because anything that you decide to do is going to be a great learning experience in reaching your dreams.

Written By: Lindsay Baczkowski
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Jessica Witt

Class of 2009



Marketing Specialist
5Nines LLC
Madison, WI



MADISON - Jessica Witt graduated in 2009 with her degree in mass communication, emphasizing in public relations. She originally hoped to work with a public relations agency, but soon found out the field was very competitive and not what she desired. She took a year to find a job she wanted, selling time shares in the Wisconsin Dells to make money. From there she moved on to selling advertising and working for ESPN Madison. Finally, she found the job she is currently at as the marketing specialist at 5Nines. 5Nines is a technology company based out of Madison.

How did the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire CJ program prepare you for the world?

The professors are really in tune with what is going on in the world. When I was at UW-Eau Claire, Twitter was a new idea. My professors encouraged me to get a Twitter account to help me get ahead in my field. They forecasted that it would be the next big thing. Eau Claire does a really good job of keeping up with the current changes in the field this way.

How long did it take you to find a job after graduation?

Well, I originally found a job in sales, selling time shares in the Wisconsin Dells, but that was just a place-holder. I then moved on to work for ESPN Madison. To find a job in public relations it took me about three years. I originally wanted to work for a public relations agency, but soon learned that if you didn't have the right connections it was nearly impossible. I then found my job at 5Nines and couldn't be happier. It is very competitive in Madison in the public relations field and I am thankful every day for the job I have.

What is your favorite part about your job?

The nice thing about working where I do is that I am the entire communications and marketing department, so I do everything from press releases to social media. This is really helpful because then I don't have to coordinate with a bunch of people to make sure that all the messages are the same. All of the messages come from me, so they are

always cut from the same cloth. I also get to see what is changing in the technology world before the majority of people do. It definitely was not a field I expected to work in. I expected to work at a public relations agency, but I can't imagine doing anything else. Every day is a new challenge and brings a new adventure.

Have you gone on to pursue any other education?

I have taken some classes in Photoshop and social media strategy. A lot of companies don't understand the difference among public relations, advertising and marketing professionals. They want this mythical person who can do everything; that's why it's important to diversify and keep learning. The more you know, the more valuable you become in the field, and the more opportunities are open for you.

Do you find it easy to balance your personal and professional life?

That is actually something that I am working on. It is a constant struggle to find the right balance, because I feel like I always need to be interconnected, and with this job that is true to an extent. Every person in public relations should learn how to balance that though, and it is definitely something I need to make into a priority. Some of my best ideas

for the company come to me when I am relaxing or hanging out with friends.

What is the most important advice you could give a public relations student?

I would say that it is to keep learning. The more you can diversify, the more opportunities will be open to you. Especially with graphic design and Photoshop, those are a few fields I wish I had focused on more. Take a few business classes or classes of a different field. There are not a whole lot of positions that are purely public relations, so companies are looking for people with multiple skill sets.

Written By: Jennifer Bagley
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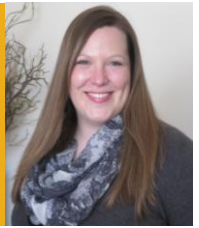
"Take a few business classes or classes of a different field. There are not a whole lot of positions that are purely public relations, so companies are looking for people with multiple skill sets."

Katie Cyrus

Class of 2008



Account Executive
Wisconsin Public Radio
Milwaukee, WI



MILWAUKEE – Katie Cyrus, a graduate with honors from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, earned a degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations. She also completed a minor in marketing along with a certificate in advanced business communication. Katie is currently an account executive at Wisconsin Public Radio, based out of the Greater Milwaukee Area. She started her career at Wisconsin Public Radio while still in school, working as an intern, and is now responsible for securing financial support from the business community while utilizing her management and marketing expertise to continue to grow Wisconsin Public Radio sponsorship.

“Work hard. Hard work and networking got me to where I am today.”

Why did you choose to study public relations?

I had originally thought I wanted to be a journalist. The more I thought about it, I knew that I enjoyed writing, yet wasn't ready for the commitment of doing it every day. I had eventually heard about public relations and realized that could bridge the gap. Public relations professionals work with journalists, and do a lot of writing themselves, but don't necessarily do it every single day.

How important are internships?

It is because of an internship that I have my job today. I started at Wisconsin Public Radio as an intern earning no money, only credits, as a student at UW-Eau Claire. When that ended, I continued to volunteer there, which turned into a paid position the last semester of my senior year. Eventually I was managing the interns. Without that internship, I would not be a paid professional at Wisconsin Public Radio.

How has studying public relations at UW-Eau Claire helped to prepare you for your career?

You don't really realize that a lot of what you learn and do helps you in the real world once you're out of school. The two things that stood out to me the most would be the public relations writing course, that offered me a hands-on learning experience, and acquiring my certificate in advanced business communication. It was learning the meticulous things like formatting and composing emails that translated directly to my position outside of school.

What part of your job do you find most fulfilling?

Working for public radio, everything we do, we do to educate people. Simply tuning

in to public radio everyday for six years they say is the equivalent of earning a four-year degree. The work we do at Wisconsin Public Radio helps people, and that makes it easy to go to work every single day.

What is the next step for you in your career?

I wish I knew. I have been here for about seven years, starting on the marketing side and then working as a producer for some of our talk shows. Now I work in the development department, so I have transitioned quite a bit within Wisconsin Public Radio. I don't know what is next, I really don't, but everyday I am more open to meeting new people and taking the next opportunity life throws at me.

What would you consider your Power of AND?

After looking back at my college career, I realized I had learned so much about myself when meeting new people and creating friendships, so I would consider my Power of AND to be education AND friendship.

Written By: Adam Bergman
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Shari Lau

Class of 2011



Communications Specialist
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI



EAU CLAIRE – Shari Lau graduated from UW-Eau Claire with degrees in Public Communication (2008) and Public Relations (2011). During her time with the university she was involved as an academic apprentice. After graduating, Shari immediately found a job working in the public affairs department at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. She is currently working as the communication specialist here at UW-Eau Claire.

How did the communication and journalism department prepare you for your future career?

I feel the close relationships I developed with faculty in the department was huge in preparing me for my career. Those relationships helped me hone my skills as well as my area of interest and figuring out what specific career I wanted to pursue. The world of public relations is very broad and having those relationships with faculty allowed me to find my niche of what I wanted to do and what my skills are. Once I found that niche, I was able to grow and develop my skills that I use in my career today.

What was your favorite part of the communication and journalism department?

It was definitely the amount of opportunities available to students. Students have access to a number of great experiences such as internships and research projects. One awesome experience I had with the department was my time as an academic apprentice. I actually did that twice as an undergraduate. It allowed me to be a part of the curriculum planning process, which was very beneficial in having that different perspective as a student. It also helped me create such great relationships with my professors with whom I still am in contact today.

Do you feel the CJ department gave you an advantage when you began looking for jobs?

Absolutely. The internships I experienced as a student helped me stand out from other job applicants. One internship that I had an awesome experience with was my time at Mayo Clinic Health System in their public affairs department. I actually found this internship when a guest speaker visited one of my communication classes. The internship really showed me what I wanted to do. I wanted to write creative stories about people, and working for Mayo Clinic opened my eyes to that opportunity.

“We have really great faculty at UW-Eau Claire. The faculty here genuinely do care about your success as a student and success after you graduate.”

What did you do immediately after graduation?

After I graduated I was kept on at Mayo Clinic for another year. They created a job for me working on their website full-time. Once that project ended, I started working at UW-Eau Claire as a communication specialist where I am currently employed. At the

university, I write stories for the website, alumni magazine and other publications. I really enjoy being able to talk with students, faculty, staff and administration about the cool experiences they have had here at UW-Eau Claire and sharing them with the world.

Would you recommend the communication and journalism department here at UW-Eau Claire to a prospective student?

Yes. This is an awesome program. We have really great faculty at UW-Eau Claire. The faculty here genuinely do care about your success as a student and success after you graduate. I would also encourage students to not be afraid to talk to their professors and get to know them. The relationships students build with faculty here is what makes this university so special.

Written By: Brad Boldenow
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Chelsey Quine

Class of 2011



**Project Manager of FT
Live Team
Financial Times
New York, NY**

NEW YORK – The day has arrived. Three months of planning have led to today’s conference. Chelsey Quine is the project manager of the operations team for the Financial Times, a team that oversees the operations and logistics of events for the prestigious publication. Her team has scheduled the venue, made sure the catering is up to par, and handled the travel arrangements for today’s speaker. But the job’s not done yet. The most critical part of Chelsey’s job is making sure the event goes off without a hitch. It can be a daunting task, but it doesn’t deter Chelsey. She lives for this moment.

What is your favorite part of your job?

The day of an event, the feeling of seeing everything you’ve worked on for months come together and be executed correctly. I also like problem solving and thinking on my feet. If there is a problem at an event, I like coming up with a solution, whether it be simple or creative.

Was it challenging finding a job after graduation?

I graduated in May of 2011. At first I went out to Las Vegas and did celebrity news for about a year until I came to New York to work for the Financial Times in August of 2012. I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time, and to have met the right person to point me in the direction of this job. Networking was critical in that. However, I still applied to several places in Wisconsin, in Vegas, and in New York. It’s important to do your research when searching for a job, and it’s important to apply to a lot of them.

How did a degree in mass communication prepare you for your career?

I knew that I wanted to do events, and that was my ultimate goal. I made sure my experiences at UW-Eau Claire, and with outside volunteer organizations, were going to help me reach that goal. I took an event planning class with Dr. Mary Hoffman, which was a wonderful class. All the internships I had also had an event planning focus. I think that whatever it is you want to do, be it media relations or writing press releases, you can set your own path by choosing the right internships. UW-Eau Claire gave me the experience and skills I needed so that I could be successful in opportunities outside of the curriculum.

What was your most memorable experience at UW-Eau Claire?

I had an internship with the Eau Claire Jazz Festival, and one thing I did with them was planning the alumni reception. I really enjoyed seeing the alumni come back to Eau Claire and still wanting to be so involved in something that was an Eau Claire program. Eau Claire always has a little place in your heart. I was also the Public Relations Director of the UW-Eau Claire chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America. Prior to going to school in Eau Claire, I worked with a nonprofit called Threads of Hope. The organization helped raise money for poor children in the Philippines by selling bracelets the children made and sending the donations back to them. I connected that organization with our chapter of PRSSA, and it was hugely rewarding to be able to work on something I was so passionate about.

What made you want to come to UW-Eau Claire?

I started college at UW-Stout with a major in fashion. However, I found out that the degree wasn’t quite what I thought it was, and that I wanted to do something different. I transferred to

UW-Eau Claire and fell in love with the mass communication and public relations degree.

What advice do you have for future communication students?

Don’t be afraid to dream big. If you would have told me while I was at Eau Claire that I would be living and working in Manhattan for a major global publication, I wouldn’t have believed you. It’s amazing to turn back and see where you’ve come from, and to see how all the work you’ve done has gotten you to where you are. You can do it. It’s not that far, and it’s not that crazy

“Don’t be afraid to dream big. If you would have told me while I was at Eau Claire that I would be living and working in Manhattan for a major global publication, I wouldn’t have believed you.”

Written By: Nate Cooper
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Natalie Judd

Class of 2008



Account Executive
Riley Hayes Advertising
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS – Natalie Judd grew up in a suburb of Minneapolis. When she came to UW-Eau Claire, Natalie had international business in mind. At that time, international business was not available and her adviser introduced her to the mass communication program. During her time in Eau Claire, she found that business classes were not for her and that she really enjoyed her classes related to public relations. Since then, Natalie has been very happy that she got that direction from her adviser. Natalie is now working for Riley Hayes, an advertising agency in Minneapolis.

What did you immediately do after graduation, and how hard was it to find a job?

When I graduated in 2008 that was around the time of the major economic recession, so finding a job in the communication or public relations field was close to impossible. It was okay for me because I had other things I wanted to do. I got a job working on Barack Obama's campaign right away. A lot of that was timing. I was drawn in by a candidate and then I went and worked on the campaign for about a year and a half, through the election and a little bit after. UW-Eau Claire prepared me well. I had a couple internships during the time I was in school, which is always a great resume builder. Now, people are hiring and things are going well. There's a lot of opportunity and a lot of choices.

How did UW-Eau Claire's communication and journalism department prepare you for your career?

I got really good experience from the high-level writing and the level of professionalism that was expected in the classroom each day, which easily transitioned into any work place. I did a lot of writing and public speaking. Now I'm in advertising where I still do a lot of writing, strategic thinking and communicating between client and agency needs.

What is your typical workday like?

I work on the account team, so I'm an account executive. My day-to-day basically entails being the main point of contact for all of my clients. The clients come to us with their needs and their projects. Then, we create written briefs and work with a project manager, creative team, digital team and media team to make the project come to life. We communicate the needs of the client and follow through with the execution.

What's been the most exciting or interesting part of your job?

I think just being exposed to some really smart and strategic thinkers has been the most interesting part. Right now, my main client is Delta Airlines. I help promote their credit card with American Express. Even though they are two big industries, they can have a lot of challenges and roadblocks. Being able to work with them and create really

beautiful pieces that help them achieve their goals is really exciting. You have a lot of pride when it's successful. There's definitely a lot of collaboration.

What is the most important advice you could give to someone wanting to get into your field?

Keep an open mind. Be able to roll with the punches. If one thing doesn't work out, there's always another option. Being flexible and being able to work on your toes are really good qualities. Be persistent. A lot of times when you're trying to find a job you have to remember that it's a competitive field. Not always being told "yes" is something you should always be prepared for.

"Keep an open mind. Be able to roll with the punches. If one thing doesn't work out, there's always another option. Being flexible and being able to work on your toes are really good qualities."

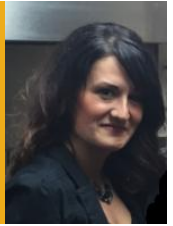
Written By: Madison Easker
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Chelsea Timmers

Class of 2008



Store Manager
DSW
Eau Claire, WI



EAU CLAIRE - Chelsea Timmers is originally from Independence, Wisconsin. She graduated in December, 2008 from UW-Eau Claire with a degree in public relations. Before graduating Chelsea already secured a job in public relations at Clear Channel in Eau Claire. She has since moved-on, and is now the store manager for DSW. Chelsea does a lot of interacting with customers and employees, and is in charge of scheduling, interviewing and hiring. She also travels once per week to different cities to visit other stores and making sure things are run correctly.

How do you feel UW-Eau Claire prepared you for your career?

I thought I was pretty well prepared for when I was going out in the work force. I really enjoyed the last few classes that I took. I obtained lots of great information from all the classes that were required for my major, but I felt that I got the most useful information from my capstone class. Due to these classes and the great curriculum I felt very prepared and ready to go out and find a job.

Is there anything you wish UW-Eau Claire would have taught you before graduation?

I wish I would have learned more along the lines of how broad the major is. When I graduated I did not think there were any jobs that I could find that pertained directly to my major, but in reality there were a lot of options. I think that it would have been beneficial to have people working in PR in the community to come into the classroom and talk more about the jobs that are out there. If they had done this I think I would have been even more prepared to go out and find a job.

How important are internships?

I think that internships are very important, not only to go on your resume, but also so you can get a feel for what you will be doing on a day-to-day basis. One of the most important things to look for while looking for internships is that they pertain directly to your major, and what you

want to be doing after graduation. Some internships are not everything they are cracked up to be. So not only having internships - but having good internships - will help you be more prepared and confident when trying to find a job.

How do you balance your work and your personal life?

Balancing your work and your personal life can be easy or difficult depending on the company that you work for. Some companies are good and understand that you do not want to be at the office for 60 hours a week, but some expect more out of you. The biggest thing would be to delegate certain tasks; make sure that you don't take everything on yourself. If you know someone on your team has the time to do a task and you have a prior commitment, then it is completely okay to let them handle it. Time management is very important to know. Give yourself time to go where you need to be.

What challenges have you faced so far in your career?

I haven't had problems with a job search, so I have been quite lucky in that department. In my last job I didn't feel that I was challenged every day and the skills that I had were not being put to work in the ways that I would have liked them to be. I felt that I needed to find a job where I felt challenged and where I felt that I was making a difference. I

am now very happy with the job I have and feel that I make a difference every day.

Is there any advice that you would like to give to current or future CJ majors.

If I could give any advice it would be to really focus on your classes. Make sure that you are getting the most out of your classes. The more work that you put into your classes the more you will get out of your classes. Give it your all because you are only there for four years, and it may seem that it is a lot of work, but in the end it is well worth it. From my experience, the classes I put more into are the ones I got more out of, especially the capstone.

"Make sure that you are getting the most out of your classes. The more work that you put into your classes the more you will get out of your classes."

Written By: Abigail Franseen
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Amy Schmidt

Class of 2009



**Member Services Assistant
YMCA of the Fox Cities
Appleton, WI**



APPLETON – During Amy Schmidt’s time at UW-Eau Claire she explored many classes, declared a major in Public Relations, and accepted the fact that she still wasn’t sure what she wanted to do. Immediately after graduating in 2009, Schmidt found herself looking for a full-time job. After applying and interviewing for many positions, she began working for the Fox Cities YMCA as their Member Services Assistant. She now enjoys helping individuals and families afford memberships through their Membership for All program.

How did UW-Eau Claire and the CJ program prepare you for your career?

UW-Eau Claire gives students the opportunity to take all sorts of classes. I took a variety of classes in departments that interested me. The CJ program provides a great foundation for writing, and it helps students understand what is going on in the world around them. It also gives students a great outlook on what to expect in the work force.

What did you do immediately after graduation?

Right after I graduated, I moved back home and worked part-time at the Appleton YMCA. I began job searching and looking for something more permanent. A family friend offered me an unpaid internship at a local food pantry. They later offered me a full-time position as the Administrative Assistant. I worked at St. Joseph Food Pantry for about a year, while still working part-time at the Y. The Y offered me a full-time position as the Member Services Assistant, and I’ve been full-time at the Y for about two-and-a-half years now.

How hard was it to find a job after graduation?

Having a part-time job and living at home after I graduated was helpful. That eliminated some stress. I was looking pretty hard for a full-time job, and it was kind of tough at first. I applied and interviewed for many positions, and I was open to where I ended up. I kind of wanted to stay in Wisconsin or Minnesota, but I was open to where I wanted to be and what I ended up doing. Then I was offered the Member Services Assistant position at the Y.

What’s been the most exciting/interesting part of your job?

I love being able to work with different people with different backgrounds. The Y is a great place to work. We have a “Membership for All” program that provides scholarship assistance for YMCA memberships. It is very rewarding to work with these families that can’t normally afford memberships. We make it happen for them.

What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?

You may not end up in the career you thought you would end up in. Be open to what you are looking for. Also take advantage of all the internships that are available in college. They provide an excellent opportunity to learn valuable

skills that may set you apart from other job applicants. If you know what you’d like to do after college, try to find internships in a related field.

What is the most important advice you can give to someone looking to start a career?

Don’t feel pressured to take the first job offer you get if you don’t think you’ll be happy doing it. You have to enjoy the work you are doing 40 hours a week or your life outside of work will be miserable as well. Also, don’t take a job just because it pays well. Money won’t buy you happiness. I don’t make a ton of money working for a non-profit, but I enjoy going to work every day, and to me that’s more important.

“Don’t feel pressured to take the first job offer you get if you don’t think you’ll be happy doing it. You have to enjoy the work you are doing 40 hours a week.”

Amanda Hornick

Class of 2010



**Catalog Manager
Mason Companies
Chippewa Falls, WI**



CHIPPEWA FALLS – Not too far down the road from Eau Claire you will find a UW-Eau Claire alumna who is working hard and loving her life. Amanda Hornick graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a degree in mass communication. She is currently the catalog manager for Mason Companies. Hornick works together with a group of co-workers from HR to ensure that everyone is working together to reach one goal. She credits UW-Eau Claire as being a large factor in getting her where she is today.

How did your communication major prepare you for your career?

I felt that I chose a well-rounded major. In the program I was able to obtain a variety of skills from public speaking, to writing, to other skills that I have been able to use throughout my life. The professors at UW-Eau Claire were extremely helpful during my time there. To me, that was important. The advice they gave was really applicable to everyday life. Although I came in undecided, I quickly chose the mass communication major during my freshman year after only taking a few communication classes.

Where did you see yourself after graduation?

I saw myself moving away, possibly to a warmer climate. Then, after I quickly realized I had no money I moved home for about a year where I worked to save money. Then, before I knew it, I found the job at Mason Companies and am now back in the area.

What exactly do you do as a catalog manager?

As the catalog manager I do a little bit of everything; from taking care of the budget for the company, to making the finalizing decisions for the overall magazine for the company, to looking over the website and making changes on the website. The most important part of my job is ensuring that we are all on the same page, and that we all have the same goal in mind. Being able to be a strong communicator is key with this career.

What has been the most exciting/interesting part of your job?

I would just say the variation that I get to be involved with everyday. No day is the same, and that is okay with me. I love the fact that I get to work with everyone. I am not working with the same people every day. I get to talk with everyone and have a lot of different responsibilities. That makes it fun and interesting. It's not repetitive work. It keeps me on my toes and makes for an enjoyable day.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

That's hard to say, but honestly I hope that I am still working for Mason Companies. I have only been here for a year, so I hope that in five years I am still here. Right now I do have a lot of different things to take care of, but down the road I would love to see myself taking on bigger challenges and just to have more responsibility. Also with that I want to try and move up from the position that I am in right now, only to grow as a person and really to just experience different positions for this company.

If you could give any advice to incoming freshman students, what would it be?

Try to take the advice professors give you to heart. They want you to succeed and they are there and willing to help you. Don't be afraid to take it. Also, I would say to get involved. I think it took me until junior year to get involved with any groups, and I wish that I would have been more involved. It was a great

way to meet people and to just expand your horizon in the things that you are interested in.

“Try to take the advice professors give you to heart. They want you to succeed and they are there and willing to help you.”

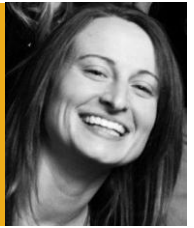
Written By: Larissa Jackson
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Ricki Lowe

Class of 2010



**Marketing and Web
Coordinator**
Mill Haven Foods
New Lisbon, WI



NEW LISBON – Ricki Lowe is living proof that not having a plan can sometimes be a good thing. When she graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire she didn't have a distinct vision of where she wanted to end up in a professional career. But as fate would have it, her post-graduate experiences helped prepare her for her current job at Mill Haven Foods (a dry food ingredients supply company) as the marketing and web coordinator. Her day can involve anything from designing packaging for products to maintaining seven different web accounts, including: three Facebook pages, two Twitter accounts, an Instagram and her sassy health blog (millhavenfoods.wordpress.com). Mostly, there is no typical day for her, but she loves every minute.

How did your communication major at UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

I think communication enables you to have a general knowledge of many skills. It lays a good foundation for most things, which you can become more experienced with later. A lot of what I do professionally is marketing and advertising, which I didn't necessarily learn in a classroom, but it provided me a good point of reference from which to learn. Another thing to consider is internships, which are valuable to students because of the hands-on experience in the field. Throughout my career, I've learned marketing and advertising are completely related to public relations; they're very much intertwined.

What's surprised you about where you've ended up?

I wouldn't have thought my experiences after college would help me in my future, but they actually have. For one, I've realized that through softball coaching I have been able to have a good rapport with my employers. Since I had moved to Boulder, Colorado and knew the area, it was particularly helpful when we launched a new product there. All these experiences have dovetailed into my current job.

Did you have a vision when you graduated?

Honestly, I had no idea what I wanted to do after college. I even moved to Boulder, Colorado twice. I knew I liked volleyball, basketball, and softball coaching 8th-10th graders so I ended up doing that for a few years. I was then lucky enough to be hired by Mill Haven Foods. It helped that I knew the owners personally from coaching their daughter. During my time at Mill Haven Foods, there's been a launch of two new companies. One of these new companies is called "Silver Star Nutrition," which I've had to invest a lot of time and effort into but it's something I've really enjoyed working on. My passion for this company partially has to do with my love for fitness and my detail-oriented personality.

"I like to put my whole heart into things, to work hard and be able to let my creative side come out in my work as well."

What's your favorite part of your job?

Through this job I've been able to create and design, which gives me a feeling of great accomplishment. I've been able to create logos for our company and I also generate a lot of content that goes online that represents the whole company. It

makes me feel as though I've made an impact. I like to put my whole heart into things, to work hard and to be able to let my creative side come out in my work as well. How many people get to go to work every day doing something they absolutely love? My job has allowed me to grow in new skills and refine old ones, and I love that every day is different.

What is the most important advice you can give to someone working in your field?

Be open to trying new things. Even though I obtained a PR degree, I didn't end up working the cookie cutter public relations job in the end. In the real world, you won't always have the opportunity to follow instructions; it is about taking initiative through independently learning new skills. A lot of success is just working really hard. When I was fresh out of college I wish someone would've told me not to worry so much about finding a job, because in the end, it'll all work out.

Joanie Foster

Class of 2008



Sales Representative
Gaggle
Bloomington, IL



BLOOMINGTON, Ill – The Monday after graduating from UW-Eau Claire with a public relations major and a minor in marketing, Joanie Foster immediately started her career at CNH Industrial in Chicago. As a part of an international project team, Joanie worked with people from across the globe to prepare the company for changes in its computer system. After working on a couple projects, Joanie left CNH Industrial in 2013 to start a career as a sales representative selling communication software for a technology startup called Gaggle. Working for a company that has been rated as one of the best places to work, Joanie is thankful for the skills and connections she made in the public relations program at UW-Eau Claire.

How did a degree in public relations prepare you for the professional world?

What you don't realize before you get into the work place is that people are really bad at communicating. It's something that was eye opening to me. I figured most people had general ideas on how communication should work, but I actually found that there is a lot of miscommunication that goes on. Simple things can lead to misunderstandings. Having the background in public relations, or communication and journalism in general, gives you a good base of understanding how to communicate and how to do so professionally, which is helpful in any industry.

What is the most exciting thing about your current job?

It's crazy. It's rated as one of the best companies to work for. Our CEO is in Silicon Valley and comes to town and throws parties, so the social aspect of the job is great. It's a young company with a lot of people who are excited to be at work. It's a really exciting culture to be a part of.

Was working in sales something you knew you wanted to do when you were at UW-Eau Claire?

No, definitely not. Having a marketing minor, I got exposed to a lot of classes in the business school. I took a professional selling class there, which was one of the best classes I ever took at UW-Eau Claire because it applies to everything. Whether you know it or not, you're always selling yourself, or an idea, or a concept, and it's a good skill to have. That's kind of where I see my current job. It's important when you take a job that you take it for a specific purpose, to learn a skill that can be transferable in the future. I think everyone should be in sales at one point in his or her career.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go into sales?

Find something you're passionate about. It's really difficult to sell something you don't like or you don't believe in. If it's something that you're passionate about, or something that you enjoy selling, it makes the job a hundred times easier.

What do you know now you wish you would have known when you were in school?

First, it's cliché, but it truly helps to build connections and a network while you're in school. It's so much harder once you leave school. People have families and priorities, and not everyone goes to happy hour. I still talk to several people I was in the public relations program with. I would

not hesitate to contact them if I was looking for a job or needed to ask advice. Second, when you're looking for your first job, the job title or description means nothing. Find a company or industry that you're interested in and go after a job there. Make sure it's a good fit for you and that you get along with the people. Most importantly, make sure you learn something that you can take with you.

“Having the background in public relations, or communication and journalism in general, gives you a good base of understanding how to communicate and how to do so professionally, which is helpful in any industry.”

Written by: Rebecca Jewell
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Tessa Krieger

Class of 2008



**Merchandise Planning
Manager
Target Corporation
Minneapolis, MN**



MINNEAPOLIS - When Tessa Krieger graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 2008, she had no idea that her degree in public relations would lead her into a career in retail, but she is very happy that it did. Tessa worked several jobs immediately after graduation, before finding the career she now loves as a Merchandise Planning Manager for the Target Corporation. Tessa loves many elements of her work, but the highlight for her is leading and teaching others. When not working, Tessa enjoys spending time in the Twin Cities with her husband.

How did you feel that the PR program prepared you for your career?

I learned to work really hard. The program taught me that I could be successful not only in my course work, but in my career. My professors and advisers were really supportive, and helped me reach my goals.

What did you do immediately after graduation?

It was a really tough economy in 2008. I knew it would be really difficult to get a job, so I applied to hundreds. Again, I had learned how to work really hard; that is what has made me successful. You just don't give up and you keep pushing forward. I thought about my education, the things I had learned and how I could apply them. I broadened my horizons and finally found a job doing part time PR for a chiropractor's office. I had five other jobs between then, and finding the career I love so much with Target.

What advice would you like to share with current public relations students?

You might end up doing something different than what you're planning on. I know I didn't think I would end up here when I graduated. No matter what you do, I believe a communications degree is always going to set you up for success. In any field, if you are able to communicate effectively, people are going to respect you.

What have you found is the most exciting part of your job at Target?

Everything is exciting. Managing a merchandising team is kind of like running my own small business within a large business. My team runs the entire active wear section of Target. I get to make a lot of big decisions that impact the way people shop at our stores. I love that I also get to develop people. I have 10 analysts on my team right now, who are all in their early twenties, and I really get to help them become successful leaders.

How do you balance work and your personal life?

I think it's tough for anybody who loves their job as much as I do to have a strong balance. One thing that I have learned is that you have to give yourself enough time to be the best person you can be at work. When you love your job you could spend every waking moment at work, because you're curious. But, at some point you have to shut things down so you can give the next day your all. Balancing work and your personal life is a learned skill, and is different for everyone. Once you find your necessary balance, you have to stick to it.

"I learned how to work really hard. That is what has made me successful. You just don't give up and you keep pushing forward."

What advice would you give to a student who would like to pursue a career in your field?

The best advice is to work hard; that's clear. It is important to be genuine. You have to be true to yourself to be successful in any field. People will respect you more if you work to your unique skill set and be yourself. A company hires you for you. Don't just tell people what they want to hear. If you spend your career working to be something other than who you are, you will be very tired and your career will be very long. With that said, you have to have fun. I have a ton of fun at work, I love the people I work with, and that is what makes my career so rewarding.

Written By: Josh Johnson
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Taylor Schult

Class of 2008



**Assistant Engagement
Director**
Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI



MILWAUKEE – Entering the job market in December is always difficult, but that didn't scare Taylor Schult. After her graduation in 2008, Taylor packed up her bags and moved to Milwaukee without a job awaiting her arrival. Through temp work and interviewing for entry-level positions against public relations professionals of ten years, Taylor finally landed her first full-time job in March at Marquette University as an office associate. Throughout her time at Marquette her job position has changed and now she primarily works with fundraising and volunteer management through events such as their reunion program, where they raise millions of dollars for the university each year.

How did the UW-Eau Claire CJ department prepare you for your career?

The liberal arts education, and the fact that we were required to take classes beyond public relations, really helped me. My role at Marquette is very diverse. I do a lot of fundraising, volunteer management, writing and some event work, so a good amount of the things I do require skills I acquired outside of the CJ department.

What is the most exciting aspect of your job?

I love everything about my job, because it is something different every single day. I have been able to travel and host alumni events around the country and I have traveled with the basketball team. Two years ago Marquette went to the Elite Eight and I got to do the whole post-season run.

What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were in school?

I wish I had taken advantage of broadening my experiences when in college, such as doing a different kind of internship with a nonprofit organization or exploring other courses. If I had known I wanted to be in a nonprofit career, I would have really taken advantage of that during my senior year and would have applied for more jobs in that field.

What motivates you to continue at your job everyday?

There are two things: the people I work with and nonprofits in general. I work with incredible people and have such great mentors, managers and coworkers who have really supported me. I have quickly been given the opportunity to take ownership of projects and have my voice be heard. Before this job I only worked for corporate, for-profit companies, and when I go to work at Marquette I know at the end of the day I can go home and know I might have made a difference for someone else's life today.

When did you feel ready to enter the job market?

I don't know if I felt prepared until I got here, and even then it took a week or two. I really loved my experience at UW-Eau Claire, but I was still scared entering the job market. I realized very quickly, however, that UW-Eau Claire prepared me very well for the work force. The courses I had taken, the professors I had, and some of the on-campus work I had really prepared me for things I didn't even realize. So when I started working, it wasn't so foreign because I was like, "Hey, I've done this before; I've had these experiences."

What advice do you have for future or current CJ students?

The biggest thing is to keep your options open. No matter what industry you are going into, having a background in communication is essential. When I graduated I was convinced I was going to work at a PR firm, do writing, and that would be my full time job. I interviewed with several PR firms and didn't feel as excited as I did when I interviewed with Marquette. I had a very narrow view of what public relations was. I thought it was only working for a PR firm and writing press releases, but there is so much more to it than that.

"I had a very narrow view of what public relations was. I thought it was only working for a PR firm and writing press releases, but there is so much more to it than that."

Written By: Casie Kamph
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Britni Welsh

Class of 2011



**Corporate Events Director
American Heart Association
Madison, WI**

MADISON – During her time at UW-Eau Claire, Britni Welsh studied public relations, advertising and applied communication. Before graduating in 2011, she expanded on her classroom knowledge through many different internship positions in vastly different fields, including sports, politics and insurance. After graduating, Welsh revisited the political world before finding her home in nonprofit organizations. She currently works with the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association where she is the corporate events director. She handles several different tasks each day including sales, fundraising, execution of events and volunteer management.

What would you say to a student who is considering a degree in public relations?

It was interesting for me because I really didn't know the career path I was going to have once I graduated. I always assumed I would stay in the political field, and that was my plan. But I quickly found out that I needed to be open to different things. There are so many possibilities, positions, and jobs to explore.

Is there anything you would have liked to know while you were still in school?

I guess there's nothing specific I would have wanted to know. I think so much of figuring it all out comes from being outside of your schooling. So, I would say just knowing to always being open to learning new things is something that's really important.

What skills did you learn in your CJ classes that most prepared you for the position you have now?

I would say any projects that related to presentations or public speaking helped the most. I do some form of that every day, whether it's one-on-one with clients or for a large group. So, I definitely think everything I did in college where I had to present to groups was the most helpful to me.

What other jobs have you had since your graduated?

My first position out of college was at a lobbying firm in Madison, Stenger Government Relations, LLC, where I was a client communications coordinator. There I worked with legislative liaisons to pass their legislation. After that, I moved out to Denver, Colorado where I was an event director for a national race that benefitted people with leukemia and lymphoma.

What classes did you take at UW-Eau Claire that most prepared you for your career?

I would say some of my sociology classes were the most interesting. A lot of what I've done and what I do now is really about relationship building. So, having that insight into people and the way they are is really beneficial. And, of course, most of the journalism classes helped me hone my skills in writing, which has been a huge benefit. People have more trust in you if you can write well.

“People are really willing to help out, so never be afraid to ask for help or guidance or potential opportunities. It can really help you out in the end.”

What advice would you give to a soon-to-be public relations graduate?

I would say that the biggest thing that has been a benefit to me since college has been that I'm never afraid to ask people things. I think that almost every single job I've gotten has been through connections. Just asking people what jobs are open, or how can I do this can really make a difference. People are really willing

to help out, so never be afraid to ask for help or guidance or potential opportunities. It can really help you out in the end.

Written By: Kelsey Karnopp
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Tara Montgomery

Class of 2008



Integrated Marketing Manager
UnitedHealth
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS – Tara graduated in December of 2008, cum laude, with a bachelor's degree in mass communication-public relations and minor in marketing. Despite graduating in a recession, immediately after graduation Tara became a Marketing Manager for multiple Green Mill restaurants in the greater Twin Cities area. For the past three-and-a-half-years Tara has worked for UnitedHealth where she is currently the Integrated Marketing Manager.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

The university faculty taught me the importance of looking at a wide range of topics from different perspectives. Learning how to think critically, ask probing questions, write and speak effectively, and collaborate in team settings are just a few of the skills UW-Eau Claire prepared me with for my future.

Do you remember some specific courses that prepared you most for your career?

Communication Research Seminar, Strategic Event Planning, Professional Selling, Mass Media Law, and Writing Center Theory and Practice have been extremely helpful throughout my career. My day-to-day work involves collaborating with my data and analytics teams, so even my college statistics class has helped me immensely professionally. There is not a single course I have taken at UW-Eau Claire that hasn't contributed to my success today.

How do you balance your work and personal life?

Besides working a full time job at UnitedHealth, I also serve as a high school dance coach and try to maintain my personal life. It certainly can be challenging at times, but I try to make sure I carve out time each day to devote to my own personal well-being. Learning how to "unplug" can sometimes be challenging – but an important step in any professional's life.

What has been the most exciting or interesting part of your job?

Healthcare is an ever-changing landscape, which poses interesting marketing challenges and opportunities. Knowing that my team and I are directly impacting millions of lives each day is extremely rewarding. My workplace is full of smart, collaborative individuals – it's exciting to learn from them and creatively problem solve together. Each day is a new adventure and I feel incredibly fortunate to be working for UnitedHealth.

What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were still in school?

Although I held an internship the summer before my last semester of college, I wish I had considered internship opportunities earlier in my academic career. I wish I

engaged in more job shadowing experiences with people in the field I was interested in, asked more well thought-out questions, and utilized in-person and electronic networking opportunities to my fullest.

What is some advice you want to give undergraduate communication majors today?

I would also advise students to keep exploring and not to limit their options. The application process can be very competitive,

but you never know what's around the next corner. I cherish all of the internships and work experiences I have had, volunteer opportunities I engaged in, and networking groups I was a part of. Even if it doesn't directly correlate with your major, the experiences you engage in during your college career ultimately help shape who you become as a professional.

"I would advise current undergraduates to keep exploring and don't limit your options. The experiences you engage in during your college career ultimately help shape who you become as a professional."

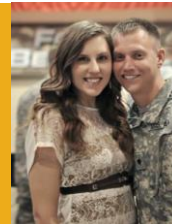
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Andrea Schmidt

Class of 2009



Trust Specialist
Synovus Trust Company
Columbus, GA



COLUMBUS, Ga. – Fleeing from the chilly temperatures of the Midwest, UW-Eau Claire graduate, Andrea Schmidt has established a warmer life in Columbus, Georgia. Schmidt moved to Georgia after getting married in 2011 to her husband, Eric. She found a job there, working for Synovus Trust Company. The happy couple now has a 10-month-old son together named Cayden. Schmidt's new beginning after graduation has been just "peachy."

What made you choose public relations as a major?

I was a journalism major up until the second semester of my sophomore year. I realized I didn't want to do journalism anymore, but I didn't really know what else I wanted to do. I picked public relations because I would still be on-track for graduation. I had taken some classes in the communication department already that I enjoyed.

What did you do right after graduation?

I went back home and applied for jobs all summer. I started working as the Unit Marketing Coordinator for Sodexo at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside; I met my husband shortly after that. I knew right away we were going to get married and I would be moving away because he was joining the army. I eventually ended up getting this job I currently hold, through a temp agency; it is really hard to get a job and live in a city where you don't know anyone.

What is your job? What do you do on a daily basis?

This is in no way a job in the field of public relations. I work for a bank called Synovus Trust Company. On a daily basis I work with the non-profit side of our institutional trust business. We manage all things non-profit. This includes various non-profit organizations, hospital organizations, educational institutions and religious organizations - to name a few. We manage their money and I work with their daily activities; if they need money taken out of, or deposited, into a trust account, I take care of that. I work with donors who donate stock and I also do a little bit of fund accounting. I have an awesome job. When I get done at 5 o'clock, I leave my work at work.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for a career?

Although I am not currently working in public relations, UW-Eau Claire provided me with real-world skills and a professional background through classes such as the PR writing class, speakers through PRSSA, various opportunities for experience, and a full portfolio. PRSSA is the best thing ever. My chapter started a student firm, did PR for an event in town and did all of their press releases. Up until a trip to Minnesota to tour a couple of PR firms, I was unsure of my major. That day I said, "Yeah, I definitely want to be a public relations major."

What has been the most exciting part of your job?

I work with a scholarship foundation. There's a golf scholarship for students whose parent, or themselves, work at a golf course that is PGA affiliated. There are about eight students a year that get everything paid for: a laptop, tuition, food, and housing, everything they would need for college. It's a charitable program and I really like that aspect. It's great to be part of something that means well.

"Get an internship. If you couldn't get one while you were in school, get one right after graduation."

What is some advice for students who are graduating or who currently attend UW-Eau Claire?

Internships are really important. Get an internship. If you couldn't get one while you were in school, get one right after graduation. Make sure that before you graduate you meet with your professors and ask if you can use them as references. Also, try to find opportunities to do informational interviews. Find someone who is in the field you want to work in and use them as a connection for networking. Don't pass up the great opportunities you are given.

Written By: Allison Manson
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Abby Richards

Class of 2008



**Event Sales Associate
Indian Pond Country Club
Kingston, MA**



KINGSTON, Mass. – Abby Richards graduated from the CJ department in 2008 and quickly began her journey to find where her passions and career would meet. After working under various job titles and achieving her master's degree, Abby soon settled into her current job as an event sales associate, which she hopes will equip her with the skills needed to eventually start her own event planning company.

How has your education from UW-Eau Claire helped you navigate your career since graduation?

Even though I am not directly using my public relations degree, I definitely use it in everyday life communicating with people, being very diplomatic in answering questions, and in my current position in Event Sales. One influential class for me was my Writing for Public Relations class. I've tended to use skills I learned from this class in every career I've had so far. The knowledge and skills I gained from this class have always been the liaison that has guided me through my multiple careers since graduation. It taught me how to be more technical about my writing, which is always a valued skill in any job.

What has your journey since graduation looked like?

After graduation, I moved to Roseville, Minnesota for two years and worked for the Roseville Visitors Association promoting hospitality. I was a sponge there, soaking up all the knowledge and skills that I could surrounding marketing, sales, and public relations. From there I continued my education and got my MBA in South Carolina. While in South Carolina, I worked for Old Navy as a manager. It didn't seem like I would use the skills from my education there, but I definitely did. It's knowing how to communicate with people and manage people. However, I've always had a love for event planning. I'm a very organized and plan-oriented person. That's how I got my job that I have now, and I absolutely love it.

Written By: Sarah Olejniczak
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What are you doing now?

As an Event Sales Associate at Indian Pond Country Club I sell the space, help with food and beverage selection, and help the client plan their set up. I make sure that everything goes the way the client wants them to go. I work mainly in weddings, but I also do a lot of social and corporate events. I love the opportunity you get when it comes to wedding planning. You really become a part of someone's family. One day I hope to branch out and start my own event planning business. I want to be able to organize everything from start to finish and work more closely with the clients.

"My biggest advice to people is that you never stop learning. You get your fundamentals through your education but every opportunity after that is a chance to learn."

What do you value most from your time at UW-Eau Claire?

I think the education I received at UW-Eau Claire was fantastic. I was very involved in a lot of different things on campus to help hone my skills in marketing and public relations. I worked as the marketing manager for WUEC-FM and did my service learning project with Wisconsin Public Radio. Outside of my marketing and public relations

endeavors, I was the president of Phi Eta Sigma, the honors society, and the Blugold Marching Band.

What advice do you have for current and prospective students at UW-Eau Claire?

College is the time in your life to try as many things as possible. Studying and work take a lot of time, but there is never going to be another time in your life that you're going to be able to go out and get a taste for as many possible things as you can. Just try to do as much as you can without overloading yourself.

What advice do you have for graduating students?

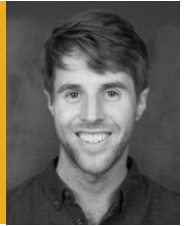
My biggest advice to people is that you never stop learning. You get your fundamentals through your education but every opportunity after that is a chance to learn. I don't know any of my friends who are actually doing what they went to school for. But the goal is to put 100% into everything you do and try to learn. There are so many different things you will learn that carry into every other career that you have along the way.

Eric Larson

Class of 2011



Editor/Producer
Mashable
New York, NY



NEW YORK – Graduating from UW-Eau Claire with a degree in public relations, Larson was ready to put his knowledge to the test by moving to New York City. He knew that opportunities could come in unexpected ways, but he did not expect them to happen to him. Larson's opportunity came on Twitter, where he saw an internship posting for a media site called Mashable. After working as an intern there, Larson was promoted to editor and producer. As of late, he has chosen to travel down a different path by accepting a strategic and management position at Facebook. He is excited to start his new position and will continue to apply the knowledge that he gained while attending UW-Eau Claire.

What drew you to major in public relations?

Originally, I thought I wanted to be a history teacher. However, after my freshman year, it occurred to me that I should pursue a major that I am passionate about. I always had a love for magazines, which led me to the public relations area. I could have majored in journalism, but I knew that public relations was closely related to journalism and would be more marketable.

What is the most important lesson you learned from the CJ department?

I learned so much from being a communication and journalism student at UW-Eau Claire. One of my most memorable times was the years I spent working for *The Spectator*. That opportunity allowed me to build-up my experience, as well as my professional portfolio to show to future employers. It helped me develop my writing and interviewing skills, which I now use in my current job.

How did you transition from Eau Claire to a large city like New York City?

Looking back, I still cannot believe that I moved from the Midwest to New York City, but it was just something I needed to do. Sometimes in life you just need to take chances with your career, otherwise, you might regret not going after what you wanted. It might have been intimidating at the time, not knowing anyone in a strange new city, but it has helped me grow not only in my career, but also as a person.

What has been the most interesting part of your job?

The most interesting part of my job has been meeting people with amazing stories. One woman I met was a survivor of the Boston Marathon bombings, who had to get her leg amputated. She taught me about courage, strength, and kindness, ultimately reminding me why stories are important to share. There are so many fascinating people in the world, and I enjoy sharing their lives with others.

“One woman I met was a survivor of the Boston Marathon bombings, who had to get her leg amputated. She taught me about courage, strength, and kindness, ultimately reminding me why stories are important to share.”

What is the most important advice you can give to communication and journalism students?

By far, the most important advice I can give is to focus on networking. Having connections can make or break your dream career. You cannot be afraid to go after what you want by constantly talking to people and forming relationships. What might seem like an unimportant acquaintance today

could turn into a chance at your future career. I constantly try to make contacts and get to know as many people as I can, because I know that it could possibly help me in the future if I am trying to find a new job or need a source for a story.

Written By: Emily Raasch
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Megan Evans

Class of 2011



Lease Coordinator
Foxboro Property Management
Eau Claire, WI



EAU CLAIRE – From city-to-city, Megan Evans has experienced a broad range of communication experience just four short years after graduating from UW-Eau Claire. Evans grew up in Rochester, Minnesota, and decided on a degree in public relations in high school. Evans expanded her love for marketing, writing and communication throughout her college years, and became president of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) her junior year. She feels she has carried many valuable skills from her years at the university to her journey through four professional jobs, ultimately landing her back in the city of her alma mater.

What was your favorite class associated with communication in school?

I enjoyed many classes associated with public relations in school, but especially Writing for Public Relations with Terrence Chmielewski. The class gave me the most skills that were transferable to jobs and internships I had during school. I could start to see my school experience translate into real-world experience.

What types of experiences during school helped you with your jobs?

During school, I was a student writer for the News Bureau and intern for the Department of Transportation (DOT) for the northwest region of Wisconsin. As a student writer, I was able to write for the university's home page and actually wrote over 100 stories. As an intern for the DOT, I was able to expand my skills in public relations writing, professional presentations, and through professional training. The DOT especially opened my eyes to all of the different aspects of public relations, from writing web content to working directly with the public doing community relations. The different interactions within the classroom serve as a great foundation in preparation for real-world experience.

What types of experiences have you had since graduation?

After graduation, I moved to Madison to become a recruiter for a software company, and after three months, I decided it wasn't the life for me. I then moved back to my hometown and worked as a marketing assistant for a national hardscapes company for two years. I later moved back to Eau Claire for my husband's job, worked as an intake specialist, and currently as a lease coordinator. Even though this may seem like a lot of different experiences, it's been great. One of the best things about public relations is you don't get pigeon-holed. There are so many different avenues, and you can transfer your skills in many ways.

What do you know now you wish you would have known when you were in school?

I wish I had done more career exploration to figure out what I wanted to do. Still, there's more to life than finding a job. I wish someone would have told me not to

compare others' accomplishments with my successes, and that not everyone is going to find their dream job right away and that's okay.

What advice would you give someone entering your field of work?

If you aren't 100% sure of what you want to do, keep yourself open to opportunities that don't necessarily match the public relations description. Try to have an idea of what specific public relations aspect you are interested in, and get involved. I was one of the only freshmen who would regularly attend PRSSA meetings, and by my junior year I was president. It's important to make connections, network with people in the field, and ultimately make opportunities for yourself.

Written By: Katie Schmitz
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“One of the best things about public relations is you don’t get pigeon-holed. There are so many different avenues, and you can transfer your skills in many ways.”

Fiona Charlton

Class of 2008



**Human Resources
Generalist
Covenant House Alaska
Anchorage, AK**



ANCHORAGE, Alaska- After her graduation in December of 2008 Fiona Charlton relocated to Florida to live with her family where she worked for Marriott Hotels for a few months. Before she knew it she was in Paris, France working as an Au Pair. Fiona didn't have time to study abroad while attending UW-Eau Claire and figured this was her ticket to Europe. Upon her return to the states she discovered the non-profit organization Covenant House Alaska which helps homeless and at-risk youth. Within a few months she was on a one-way trip to Anchorage where she is now in her fourth year at Covenant House Alaska.

What was your experience like finding a job?

At first it was tough because I didn't really know what I wanted to do. Luckily there's always a need for people in tourism in Florida, so I got work there pretty quickly. It gave me time to travel and explore the world a bit before I really joined the workforce. In England they recommend a "gap year" in between high school and college to give students time to figure things out. I just took mine at twenty two instead.

How did UW-Eau Claire's CJ department help you prepare for your career?

I think the courses there helped me enough to work in any related field, but definitely prepared me for where I'm currently working. Dealing with time management and deadlines was what really helped me prepare for a job in human resources.

What exactly do you do at your job?

As the HR Generalist, I'm responsible for four areas: onboarding of new hires, maintaining benefits for employees, making sure all legal work is in place, and general management of employee relations. I'm a one person department for this location in the organization, so I keep very busy. A lot of my job is working with other internal departments to make sure they have everything they need and that it's in order.

How do you balance work and free time?

Being a one person department in a non-profit organization, I tend to stay busy and I usually put in more than the usual eight hour workdays. When I first moved to Alaska I made great friends with my co-workers, which made work feel a lot like my free time in some ways. It's important to make close connections especially in an unfamiliar place without family or close friends nearby.

What's an interesting story you have from your workplace?

I think being in a place I didn't really know, like Alaska, gave me a bit of a culture shock. When I first got here I did some casework where I got to observe the interviews they did with our youth. Normally there are some tough questions that get asked but some are pretty normal like "where are you from?" There was one kid who said he was from the North Pole. After the interview I asked the supervising manager if the youth had a tendency to lie a lot because no one lives at the North Pole. Apparently there's a town a few hundred miles away that's actually called North Pole. To

everyone who lives in Alaska it's pretty common knowledge, but to me it was something totally new. So there was quite a bit of culture shock and adjusting I had to do.

What's the best advice you can give to someone considering the same field of work?

I would definitely recommend finding a mentor in the field you want to work in, someone who you can ask questions and get useful feedback from. Since I took a non-traditional route to working in human resources I'm looking at completing further education so that I can gain even greater experience in this field.

Written By: Logan Stewart
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***"I'm a one person
department for this
location in the
organization, so I keep
very busy."***

Rachel Schultz

Class of 2010



**Wish Coordinator
Make-A-Wish Wisconsin
Waukesha, WI**



WAUKESHA – When Rachel Schultz graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with a degree in psychology and public relations she began the search to find the career of her dreams. Her hunt began in Eau Claire and ended in Waukesha. Schultz accepted a job with Make-A-Wish Wisconsin as a Wish Coordinator in March of 2012 and has been with the organization ever since. It is Schultz's job to help grant the unique wishes of children who are suffering from a life threatening medical condition.

What did you do after graduation?

When I was in my senior year at UW-Eau Claire I had an internship with Big Brothers Big Sisters and when I graduated they offered me an opportunity to work for them full time as a marketing coordinator. After my time at Big Brothers Big Sisters I moved to a different part of Wisconsin and worked as a day care teacher for a bit. After that I packed up and moved to Waukesha where I landed my job as a Make-A-Wish Coordinator.

How tough was finding a job after graduation?

It was pretty easy initially because I had established some pretty strong connections in Eau Claire. It really is all about who you know. It became a bit stressful after I left my job in Eau Claire because I needed to re-establish connections. Once I moved to Waukesha and started a job hunt I spent about 4-6 months applying. After nearly 30 applications I was offered my job at Make-A-Wish.

How did UW-Eau Claire programs prepare you for your career?

The education I received at UW-Eau Claire really set me up for success. The public relations track really helped set me up for the future because they provided real life challenges with real world clients. UW-Eau Claire gives students a variety of transferable skills like communication, leadership, teamwork and so many more.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is being able to allocate funds and set up cool experiences for children who are suffering. I feel like a fairy god mother because I am making wishes come true. Many feelings and emotions come with my work and I like it because I get to connect with so many different people.

How do you balance your work life with your personal life?

It's really important to find that balance between your work and personal life, especially when you are raising a family. I currently have the opportunity to work from home one day a week and I love it because I get to spend time with my young son.

What do you know now you wish you would have known while in school?

I think it's important to understand that nothing can prepare you for real life work experience. School sets you up to succeed, but once you enter the workforce it's up to you to utilize those skills to the best of your ability.

What advice do you have for students?

I would say the most important thing a student can do while in school is network. Those connections don't only offer mentorship while in school, but they can also offer foot-in-the-door opportunities or connect you to other professionals post-graduation. I would also suggest students take part in an internship and get involved with organizations on-campus. Not only do they also offer great networking opportunities, but they help give you real world experiences.

"The public relations track really helped set me up for the future because they provided real life challenges with real world clients."

Written By: Alysha Stoffel
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Daniel Coughlin

Class of 2011



Financial Advisor
Royal Credit Union
Eau Claire, WI



EAU CLAIRE – After graduating with a degree in mass communication, with an emphasis in public relations, Daniel Coughlin fortunately landed an internship with Sacred Heart Hospital. After completing that, as well as a long job search, he landed his current job as a financial adviser at Royal Credit Union (RCU) in Eau Claire.

How do you believe UW-Eau Claire prepared you for life after graduation?

I was really pushed out of my comfort zone during college. Being involved in extracurricular activities, such as wrestling, kept me disciplined and focused. I feel I am capable of doing things on my own now and I am not prepared to have anything handed to me in life. The most important thing to know is that the bigger the risk, the bigger the opportunity. Currently, as a financial adviser at RCU, I interact daily with branch managers to collaborate on customers' accounts and I feel that my communication skills and ability to reason with people have vastly improved due to my background in public relations.

What do you know now that you wish you had known during school?

I wish I had applied myself more in several areas. This includes utilizing forms of social media that I wasn't familiar with in college and exploring the technology labs in Hibbard to familiarize myself with programs that are essential for any public relations graduate (e.g. InDesign, Photoshop). I feel this would have given me more leverage in my professional field.

Written By: Emily Torgerson
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How hard was it to find a job after graduation?

After graduation, I sent out about 25 job applications within a month before I got an answer from RCU. My advice would be to not get discouraged because you can't expect to land the job of your dreams fresh out of college. Every experience is a learning experience. You should always be keeping your portfolio current outside of your job with freelance writing pieces so that when opportunity knocks, you are ready.

What has been the most exciting part of your job?

Just last week, I was involved in a conference call with Charles Barkley from the NBA. To have a small-town guy like me be able to sit in on a call with Barkley, I think that is pretty amazing. Also, I really love the freelance work that I do outside of my normal office hours. I started my own professional website and I enjoy helping people promote and market themselves.

In your opinion, is the public relations job market stable?

I think that in any emerging field, there is an initial "boom" where it then taps out and reinvents itself. There is always a place for somebody in any field and you just have to possess the determination and confidence in yourself to never stop until you are satisfied with your life. I would say that the current job market for public relations graduates is alive and well.

What advice can you give any upcoming graduate of the public relations field?

The biggest advice I can give any person looking to land a job in the public relations field is to get as many internships as you can. They look excellent on your resume and show that you can apply what you have learned in the classroom to reality. I would also have to say that perseverance is key. Always continue to apply yourself and move up on the career ladder.

"The most important thing to know is that the bigger the risk, the bigger the opportunity."

Emily Fiedler

Class of 2010



Senior Project Manager
Lumi
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS – After graduating from UW-Eau Claire with a mass communication degree with a public relations emphasis, Emily Fiedler spent a year and a half waitressing and working at Lifetime Fitness. She then moved to Pittsburgh where she worked at FedEx for five months. She is now living in the Twin Cities where she has been working at Lumi for three years as a Senior Project Manager. Emily works in the Meetings and Events division of Lumi, working with mobile applications focused on audience engagement.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

I had a fantastic junior year. I was really interested in event planning and I was a part of the first ever event planning class at UW-Eau Claire where there were 25 girls and only one boy. After taking the class it was something I saw myself doing. I joined the Event Services production crew and there we helped with events that were on campus. I was also president of the University Activities Commission. I was also on the Board of Directors for Student Senate. I joined clubs and was involved.

Was it tough to find a job?

It was not too difficult to find a job. I jumped right back into waitressing as soon as I graduated college. LinkedIn is a very helpful resource to use when you need to find a job. There are companies always looking to hire people and it can make the job hunt much easier. I recommend applying to a lot of jobs and to have a great cover letter and resume tailored to each specific job you are applying for. Do not be afraid to apply for jobs you think you might not be able to get because you never know what could happen by simply taking a chance.

What is the most interesting part of your job?

I am challenged every single day. I enjoy the problem solving work and working with a wide variety of people. There is a really good culture within my job.

How do you balance work with your personal life?

I work for a great company. I get to manage my own life while I work very hard; we are mostly on call 24/7. It can get super busy. I work one day a week from home and four at the office. Work can take over your life but you need to make sure to find time for yourself. Good time management is key to balancing work with your personal life. Prioritize the things you have to do to help you succeed

What did you wish you would have known while you were going to school?

I would have liked to have known as much about financial aid help as possible. I also wish I would have taken better advantage of scholarships the university has available.

Also, the most important thing is to make sure you walk out of the university with gaining more than just a GPA.

“Make sure you walk out of the university with gaining more than just a GPA. You do not have to know exactly what you want to do with your life.”

Did you enjoy UW-Eau Claire?

I loved my time at UW-Eau Claire. I spent four and a half years there. My sister now attends UW-Eau Claire and I enjoy when I get to visit. I really enjoy the beauty Eau Claire has to offer. The people there are wonderful and it offers its own little area.

What is the most important advice you can give to someone wanting to get into your field?

You do not have to know exactly what you want to do with your life. With a public relations degree there are many different areas that you can pursue a career in. Take advantage of all the things the university has to offer. Talk to many different people on campus to get involved because there is a lot happening on campus.

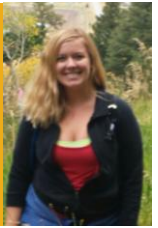
Written By: Jack Trudeau
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Sarah Hanson

Class of 2010



Training Operations Coordinator
Best Buy Co., Inc.
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS - When Sarah Hanson graduated in 2010 with a degree in public relations she had no idea how valuable that degree would be. After graduation she went down to Arizona and took some time to relax while working as a waitress and applying for jobs. Not long after, she received a position as an event coordinator for a REALTOR® Association. Sarah has since relocated back to the Twin Cities, and is currently the training operations coordinator for Best Buy.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

Starting off as an event coordinator and then moving to my current position as a training coordinator, I find myself consistently using the skills that I learned as a public relations student to be successful. The communication and journalism department gave me the skills to write, work and speak efficiently. Professors and advisers gave me the tools and helped me build my resume and interviewing skills

What did you immediately do after graduation?

After graduation I moved down to Arizona. After a few months I received a position at a REALTOR® Association. I was responsible for planning charity events, community outreach events, and mixers for REALTOR® and their affiliates.

What are you most excited about in your position right now?

Currently I am working on developing training schedules for the entire corporate campus. This requires me to develop training plans for different departments such as the IT, finance and marketing departments.

How do you balance your career and your personal life?

You have to take your personal life and make it the most important. You will never do well in your career if you are not happy in your personal life. Even my bosses agree that having a healthy personal life is important.

What do you know now that you wish you would have known during your time at UW-Eau Claire?

I wish I would have known how transferable the skills I was learning were to a career path. Courses such as Writing for Public Relations gave me the skills to properly write for any given situation. All of the skills that I learned as a student I have used in my career.

What is the best advice you could give a student wanting to get into your field?

Be patient, yet stay excited. The great thing about a communications degree is that it leaves so many doors open for opportunities. Within the five years that I have graduated from UW-Eau Claire I have had the opportunity of being employed in two very different industries. Start building a portfolio of work that you have done in your college courses. Preparing a portfolio has helped me land positions that required three to five years of experience.

“The great thing about a communications degree is that it leaves so many doors open for opportunities.”

What do you suggest for students entering the job market?

You will send out many resumes, get many interviews and still not receive some positions. You may even interview for jobs that you think you are over-qualified for and still not get them. I suggest bringing a portfolio that shows the work that you have done and how you are capable of contributing to the company.

Written By: McKenzy Wagner
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**Thanks for
Reading**

