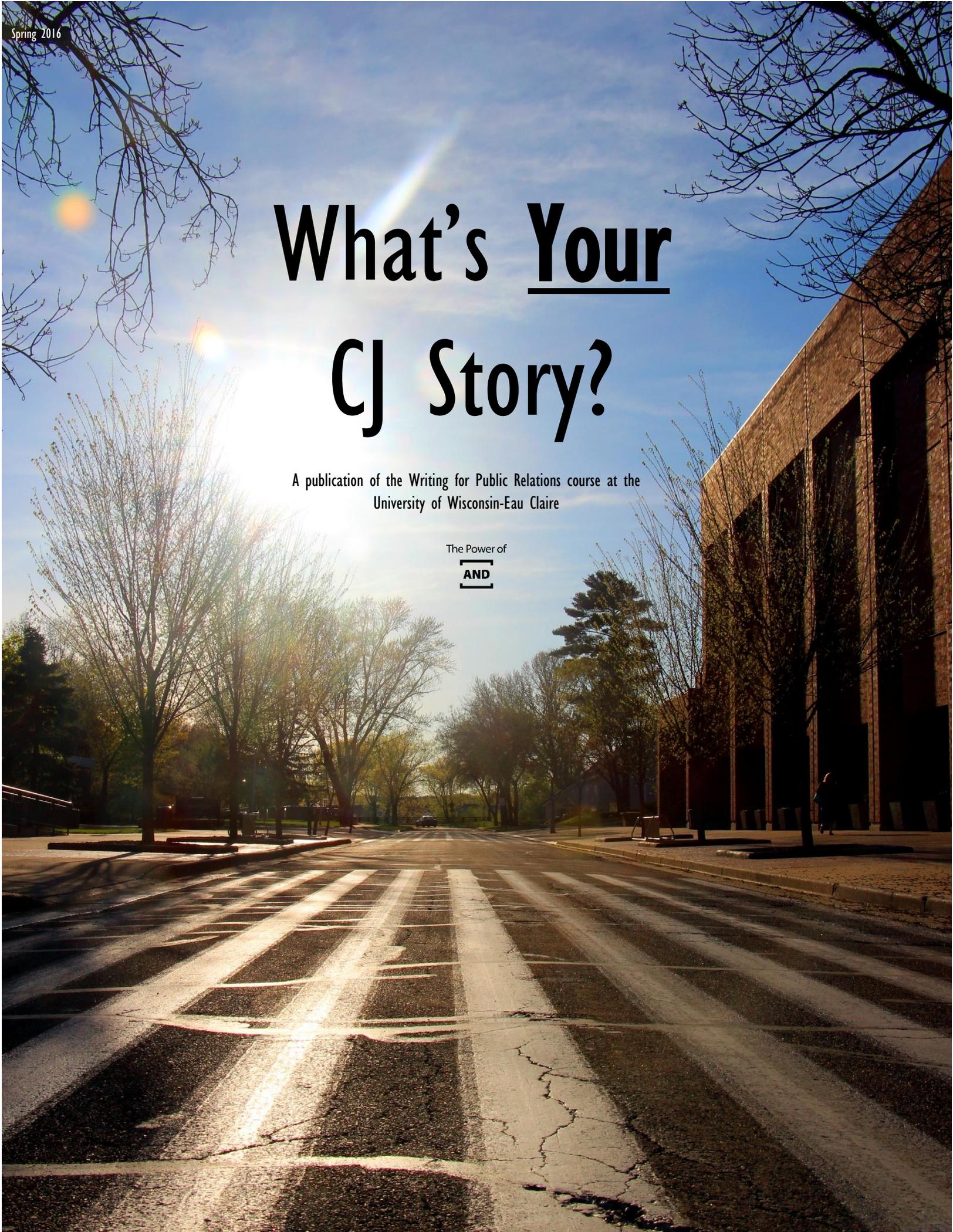


What's Your CJ Story?

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

The Power of

AND



The Ever-Curious Communicator

Curiosity is the characteristic that has led me through three career changes, and it is curiosity that I try to impress on my students. In the world of communication, it is important to expand your knowledge constantly, to be curious about everything.

My own history shows how diverse the path of a communication graduate can be when driven by curiosity. My career in communication began as a journalist, working as a newspaper reporter and then a television producer. I am a news junky, curious about news of all kinds. I made a career move to public relations, the “dark side” of communications as journalists call it. Unlike journalism, where my role was to provide fair and balanced reporting, public relations allowed me to be an advocate. I worked in health communication, telling stories about issues I was passionate about, from reducing tobacco use to communicating how health care systems work. My curiosity about evidence-based medicine led me to pursue a doctorate degree to explore “evidence-based” public relations, and why some communication is more effective and influential than others.

I now use my skills as a storyteller in teaching and advising students at UW-Eau Claire about strategic communication. My research focuses on analyzing strategic communication, focusing on the relationship between traditional news media and social media, and trying to answer the question of what works and doesn’t work in communication.

The new integrated strategic communication program at UW-Eau Claire helps students understand and develop skills in a range of storytelling approaches, encompassing public relations, advertising and multimedia communication. Having such a varied skill set gives students a competitive edge in a number of career fields. As the alumni profiles show, students may not end up working in a communication position after graduating, but the versatile skills and knowledge majors in integrated strategic communication gain will prove invaluable in any career path.

To be successful in an integrated strategic communication career, students need to gain experience in all areas of communication: writing and visual communication to convey ideas, data analysis to both communicate and to evaluate communication, social media and social skills to interact with people, confidence in communicating to crowds or one-on-one, and curiosity – endless curiosity to ask questions and learn about the world.

What does success as a communicator look like? Scroll through these pages to read profiles of CJ alumni written by current students in the Spring 2016 Writing for Public Relations class. See the paths of curiosity in these alumni’s communication careers.

And thanks for being curious –



Maureen Schriener, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Integrated Strategic Communication

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Anne Marie Rapp

Class of 2005



**Digital Nomad & Co-founder
The Yoga Nomads
Dominical, Costa Rica**



DOMINICAL, Costa Rica – Anne Marie Rapp started her journey as part of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Class of 2005. After graduation, Anne worked in a corporate sales position eventually leading to jobs in consumer trend research and software sales with Oracle. While working as a communication professional, Anne discovered yoga and went through yoga teacher training. Her love for yoga inspired her to quit her job in January 2014 to travel the world, teach yoga and co-found the website “The Yoga Nomads.” Anne has been able to combine her passions of travel, Spanish and yoga with her gift in communication to create a path that aligns with who she is and how she wants to live. She continues to build upon the knowledge she gained at UW-Eau Claire every day with real world experiences.

Why did you choose public relations?

I’ve always been really good with communication. I’ve always had writing come really naturally to me, so I decided to go into mass communication, and I found public relations just because I felt like it would be good to put with Spanish. Spanish is my passion. Public relations was more like I was good at it, so I wanted to major in it. I just double majored in both to marry the two together.

How do you see the skills you got at UW-Eau Claire being used in your jobs after graduation?

I didn’t go to the business school, but I still got that side of things from the communication and journalism department just in a completely different manner. So if you’re able to read and write and communicate effectively, that’s the majority of what it takes to be successful. I wouldn’t give up my education at UW-Eau Claire for anything, because I do think it set me up for success. But a lot of that is what I chose to put into it. If you don’t put anything into it, you’re not going to get anything out of it. It’s a two-way relationship in a big way. You go to school for four years to really kill it and learn as much as you can. Then you go into the real world, and you learn so much more.

How important is it to be passionate about your career?

It’s so important. But it’s also important to remember that you’re not going to get there right away. Even if you’re in a job after school that maybe doesn’t seem like something you would love for the rest of your life, take it all in and know that it’s helping build you up. It’s exactly where you need to be in that moment to get you to the next place. And you don’t even know it in the moment.

What does your future look like as of right now?

I strongly believe in balance in life, and I think my dream right now would be to continue to teach yoga at international locations. I want to get in on some retreats, because that’s where the money is. I just want to continue to inspire people in whatever way that is. Whatever shape

that takes, whatever form that takes in the next five, ten, fifteen years—that’s what it’s going to be. It’s knowing that I might have a goal of being a CEO in ten years but the journey to get there is going to be a crazy ride that is just as important as reaching that goal.

What is your biggest piece of advice for prospective students?

The biggest piece of advice is just to remain open-minded. No matter what side of school you go into, no matter what you decide to major in, know that it doesn’t have to be public relations for the rest of your life. What you do learn will set you up regardless. Find something you’re passionate about or good at. Just focus your attention there, and see how you do. Pay attention to the way your mind works when you’re trying to focus and where it wanders. That’s really what you should be doing. At 18, how are you supposed to know what you want to do with your life? And if you have a gift in writing or communication of any style, play around with that and talk to alumni or the faculty at UW-Eau Claire. They’re so willing to talk to you about what the classes are like and what skills you need to succeed in that area.

“You go to school for four years to really kill it and learn as much as you can. Then you go into the real world, and you learn so much more.”

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Kimberly Nancarrow

Class of 2007



Partner Sales Associate
Ingram Micro
Detroit, MI



DETROIT – A 2007 graduate with a major in both mass communication and political science, Kimberly Nancarrow currently represents Ingram Micro, a partner with Cisco, as a partner sales associate. As a full-time student and employee during her time at UW-Eau Claire, Kimberly is not new to standing out from the status-quo. From project coordination with The North Central Group, and medical center managing with Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions, Nancarrow has definitely taken the path less travelled.

Where did you see yourself after your graduation in 2007?

Being a political science and mass communication major, I did not imagine that I would be in sales. Anyone who knows me personally knows that I like to plan and arrange so there are no surprises or complications in my life. So to see my career path take its turns to lead me here is something I would have never imagined after graduating. Now, as I work from home in sales for a company I truly believe in, I'm glad that I graduated in majors that gave me skills I can use in almost any career.

Speaking of skills, what skills do you find yourself using the most from UW-Eau Claire?

What it really boils down to is my communication skills. Whether I'm collaborating with my colleagues from Ingram Micro or pitching to a client, communication is key. Knowing what to include in an email, what deserves face-to-face conversation and what to say in all types of situations is about knowing your audience, and tailoring your message so everyone involved is on the same page. Why waste a conference call when you have no questions to be asked, or why send an email when a friendly phone

call would be better? This will not only save you time, but also creates professionalism and an organized work environment. This professionalism and organization is vital to keeping my work impressive, while maintaining the luxury to work from home.

Looking back, what advice would you give to a current student in the CJ department?

Honestly, it would be to spend more time on campus. Of course, I can't stress enough how glad I am that I now have no debt from student loans by working full-time throughout school, but I do wish I had taken more opportunities that the university provides. There

“Be confident that the skills you learn from the CJ department are skills you'll use for the rest of your career, wherever it may lead you.”

are so many clubs, organizations, and chances to travel or study that I didn't participate in and, as I reflect, wish I had been a part of. Part of finding your dream job is about finding your passions. So take that alternative spring break trip, or join a tennis league. You won't know what you want to do for the rest of your life until you find what

makes you happy.

Do you have any advice for recent, or soon-to-be graduates?

You don't know your journey yet. Be confident that the skills you learn from the CJ department are skills you'll use for the rest of your career, wherever it may lead you. Use your writing and speaking skills as best you can, and you already have a leg up above everyone else you could be competing with for a position. Also, know your worth. After graduation, you and your skillset are valuable to any business. Learn to put a number on your abilities and you'd be surprised how much you're worth.

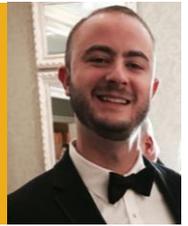
Written by: Ellen Atkinson
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Alex Lindorff

Class of 2006



**Neurological Technical
Service Specialist
Medtronic, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN**



MINNEAPOLIS - Alex Lindorff graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 2006 with a major in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations and a minor in political science. After graduation, Alex interned at a public relations firm in Bloomington, MN. In 2010, he enrolled at Concordia University-St. Paul, where he obtained a Master of Business Administration degree with a focus on health care management. As he returned to Minneapolis, the area he is originally from, he joined a company that is a global leader in medical technology, Medtronic, Inc. His current position, Neurological Technical Service Specialist, focuses on educating health care providers on neuromodulating stimulation systems. He also runs his own entertainment business. I spoke to Alex over the phone to talk about his professional life after Eau Claire.

How did you get into your current position?

My career path developed in an organic type of way. When I was interning in Bloomington, I really did enjoy working in public relations. However, I found myself on the sales side of things after moving on from the internship and eventually found my way into a marketing role at Medtronic. My current position does not have a lot to do with public relations, but that is not to say that I do not use things that I learned as a public relations major in my day-to-day life.

What is the most interesting part of your job?

When I was working in public relations, the most interesting thing was how many different clients and businesses you get to work with. It is always about changing your perspective and trying to learn more about each business and its products, and becoming well-rounded in business networks. As far as my current position, I get to work with a lot of incredible technologies that help patients with various neurological ailments.

Written By: Sindija Balode
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How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?

I would say that the liberal arts education as a whole at UW-Eau Claire helped me to become well-rounded and knowledgeable in a variety of subjects. I loved my time in Eau Claire. When I first came to Eau Claire, I actually studied pharmacy, but I switched my major to communication, which I always felt was a strong suit. In the communication and journalism department, all the professors I had had a passion for education. I thought that this major really sort of crossed barriers, and having excellent communication skills seemed like a good idea.

What do you know now you wish you had known in school?

This is going to sound stupid, but it is so true. I wish I would have studied abroad. Especially in Eau Claire, where so many people study abroad, I never did and I

regret that decision. I completed my MBA in 2012 and there was an option to travel to China with the class, which I could not do either.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

Regarding public relations, it is challenging how very competitive the field is. In medical technologies, you know that every day you are going to come into work and be challenged to find something better.

You are going to face something new that has to be developed. It is difficult, but it is certainly rewarding.

What are the most important skills you learned as a public relations major and that you still use?

Communication in general is such a worthwhile path to be in. Knowing who your audience is and how to tailor your communication style to that audience is a huge part of public relations and of business in general. Whether you are speaking to your colleague or making presentations for a group of health care professionals, the way in which you communicate is incredibly important depending on who your audience is.

“I would say that the liberal arts education as a whole at UW-Eau Claire helped me to become well-rounded and knowledgeable in a variety of subjects. I loved my time in Eau Claire.”



MINNEAPOLIS – Amanda Huneke is familiar with the strategies of communication. A graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in the Communication and Journalism department, Amanda has experience in multiple areas of the field of communication. Her expertise has brought her to a public relations agency, a US Army local defense contractor, and has since settled into graduate school communications. Amanda currently lives in Minnesota with her husband and enjoys managing their new wine bar in Edina, MN. Amanda is passionate about the field of communication and is using the skills and experiences she garnered from UW-Eau Claire to support her in her profession.

When did you graduate from UW-Eau Claire?

I received my degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations, and a minor in marketing in 2005. I went on to receive my master's of business of communications from the University of St. Thomas in 2012.

How are you using your degree in communications in your field of work?

I currently work at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota in the Opus College of Business. I primarily work with graduate business alumni relations. To keep former students connected with the university, I also offer continuing support, as well as recruiting efforts. This job involves a lot of communication with many different people, which involves strategic planning.

What is your favorite thing about how you are using your degree?

I love the idea of strategy, or operationalizing how I will actually execute an idea. Many people can come up with a good idea, but it really takes knowing the publics as well as the organization to execute it successfully.

What were some of the things that best prepared you for your job?

I would give a lot of credit to my internships and entry level jobs right out of college. I worked hard to have internships in college, and the variety of roles I was able to experience built me up to be successful in multiple areas in the future. I enjoy how all of the different skills I built up during various

internships and jobs all applied to my current job. I will pick out things I learned from one specific job that I wouldn't think would help me now. Anything I learned in one specific field of communication can be applied in another.

What would you like to share with prospective and current students at UW-Eau Claire?

The communication and journalism department truly prepares you for the real world. I was encouraged to get an internship as well, which was one of the best experiences I had to prepare for the future. I would encourage students that even though everything about public relations isn't all glorious, the opportunity to communicate and speak for so many different people is truly an experience that you don't want to miss.

“Many people can come up with a good idea, but it really takes knowing the publics as well as the organization to execute it successfully.”

Kevin Garczynski

Class of 2006



Sound Devices, LLC
Marketing Project Specialist
Madison, WI



MADISON- The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire helps you build a foundation that offers you limitless opportunities, and Kevin Garczynski is a prime example. He graduated in 2006 and is now working as a marketing project specialist at Sound Devices, LLC. This is a company that creates production audio and video equipment used in television and motion pictures. It is a world renowned company based out of Reedsburg, Wis. Kevin offered enriching advice on how to be successful after graduation.

How did UWEC help prepare you for your career?

I think my writing foundation really started to come together at UW-Eau Claire. I remember CJ222, News Reporting & Writing- was a really important class. They called it the “boot-camp” of writing classes. This is where I learned how to write AP style, which has become essential in my everyday life. These rules help govern proper writing for news outlets across the country, and even all over the world. It really comes down to that writing foundation that I was able to form in my early CJ classes. I didn’t want to be a journalist, but you have to know how to communicate with them. Another helpful skill I learned while at UW-Eau Claire was presenting information. Sometimes you are in settings where you are sitting amongst your peers or you have to give a presentation. My past experiences gave me confidence because I had done it before. I think these were immensely important skills I learned at UW-Eau Claire.

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

I wish I would have taken technology more seriously. While I was at UW-Eau Claire I took a web design class. Little did I know that once I was in my career I would be doing a lot of web design work. My first job with WHEDA I went in as a communication specialist where I was just writing press releases and helping to write speeches. That

job morphed into a marketing role where I was working closer to the advertising side. I was able to tailor the website to directly reflect our ad campaigns. There are many layers to this profession that I didn’t realize while in school. I always thought that an IT team would handle the website, but that is actually handled by the marketing team. With my marketing minor I was able to take sales classes and marketing promotion classes. These classes helped me excel at my current job. You learn the foundation in school, but often times you are completely retrained on the job. Once you are out in the field you will truly understand how a business works and how communications and marketing play a role in it.

What has been the most exciting part of your job?

At Sound Devices I am always learning about new technology. One of my favorite parts about this

job is the ability to work with everyone. There is so much flexibility, meaning you are able to wear many hats. If you get bored easily, marketing and communications is a great field to get into because you are constantly learning new things. I recently had to learn how to use Adobe Premiere Pro. I was asked to create videos and I had never used this program before. So I looked up videos on YouTube and taught myself. That is just one of the hats I have had to wear.

What is advice that that you could give someone wanting to go into your field?

Make sure that you diversify your classes. It’s important to be a well-rounded individual when you leave school. This will show future employers that you are essential to success.

“Make sure that you diversify your classes. It’s important to be a well-rounded individual when you leave school.”

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Stephanie Maher

Class of 2005



Loan Partner II
Waterstone Mortgage
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS— As many students find out after graduation, the profession they find themselves in is not always a reflection of the major they pursued while in school. The lessons and skills, however, are just as valuable in other fields. Stephanie Maher, a public relations alumna, is a Loan Partner II at Waterstone Mortgage in the Twin Cities. Since before graduating from UW-Eau Claire, Stephanie has worked in the financial industry. I recently spoke with Stephanie about her experiences after graduation and how public relations prepared her for her current profession.

Did the skills you developed while in the public relations program prepare you for your current profession?

Though I have never used my degree, the communication courses I took while attending UW-Eau Claire certainly prepared me to be an effective communicator at Waterstone Mortgage. Working with individuals and couples through the process of purchasing their first home can be difficult, so good communication skills are very important as a Loan Partner II.

Do you have any advice for students after graduation?

Life after graduation can be difficult and seem strange for a few years after. For me, it was strange not going back to school each fall. My advice to students is to network. I feel the most effective way to get a new job is by reaching out to all of the contacts you have. Reach out to everyone you can think of to let them know you are looking for a job and see if they have any leads for you. Of course, don't forget to use social media in your job hunt as well.

What was life like for you after graduation?

After graduation I wasn't sure what I wanted to do but because I worked as a teller while in college, I ended up working at a number of financial institutions until I decided I needed a break. I had been working at a credit

union for a few years when I decided I needed a different perspective on life. I traveled across Europe for nearly a month in what was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I returned shortly after the 2008 financial crisis had started, making the job market difficult. I held two different positions for a couple years until eventually landing at Waterstone Mortgage in 2012.

What did you take away from your time in Europe?

As I said, the trip to Europe was an amazing experience and provided me with a totally new perspective on life. I think for the first time I finally understood the saying, "the world doesn't revolve around you." My trip across Europe at times made me feel so small but it also gave me a whole new outlook on my place in this world. Upon my return, I felt a new sense of self and was ready to continue where I left off.

If you weren't in the financial industry what would you like to do?

I would really like to take up a marketing position because I graduated with a minor in business marketing. I would love to return to school and pursue a master's degree in marketing. While at UW-Eau Claire I really enjoyed taking courses about consumer and marketing research. Marketing really interests me and is something I could see myself doing in the future.

What is your favorite part about being a Loan Partner II at Waterstone Mortgage?

My favorite part about being a Loan Partner II is working with first time homebuyers and assisting them through the often emotional process of buying their first home. Due to the difficult nature of this decision, we get to know our clients well which makes this work so much more rewarding.

“Though I have never used my degree, the communication courses I took while attending UW-Eau Claire certainly prepared me to be an effective communicator.”

Written by: Bryce Dokkestul
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MINNEAPOLIS - UW-Eau Claire lets you explore your passions, and Natalie Wires did just that by studying her interests in writing and society through concentrations in public relations and sociology. Natalie is a 2007 graduate who used her experiences in the classroom and her internship to help her get prepared for the workforce. She recently started a new job at Digital River where she manages digital communication strategy.

How did the communication and journalism program better prepare you for your career in public relations?

The CJ program helped me develop my writing skills. Each assignment gave me the opportunity to write in different ways. When my writing became strong, I started to save my best assignments in a portfolio. During my interview I showed pieces that I was proud of, especially my campaign that I created during my capstone class. That example helped me land my first job.

What did you do immediately after graduation?

I was extremely fortunate that I was able to get into the workforce before the economic recession. I decided to apply at an agency because I didn't know what kind of communication I wanted to do. It was exciting to learn how to change communications strategies and writing styles based on the needs of different companies, which is why Tunheim was a perfect fit for me after graduation.

What was the most interesting part of your job at Tunheim?

Two days were never the same for me. I would have a number of clients at one time in multiple different industries. It was exciting to see my voice in my writing change throughout all of the different companies. After working there for eight years, I learned that I enjoy creating strategies and writing for multiple clients at the same time. When I saw the opening at Digital River, I knew it would be a new opportunity to try to write for

different types of clients. I've only been working here now for two weeks, and I'm excited to see where this job takes me.

How do you balance your work and personal life?

At first it was really hard to set boundaries. I wanted to stay on top of everything so I was checking my emails around the clock. I learned that just because someone is

emailing you that doesn't mean they are expecting a response right away. I started to set boundaries for myself. I believe taking time for yourself is extremely important. You need time to recharge to be a well-balanced, creative and productive professional.

What advice would you give to incoming freshman?

Enjoy your time at UW-Eau Claire. College is a unique time you will never get the opportunity to

experience again. You should get involved in different types of activities. I personally joined PRSSA, intramural sports, and took a semester and studied abroad. These activities are where I met my friends and helped me build my network. You should also try to get at least one internship. This is the time you can test out different industries to see which ones you enjoy. My last piece of advice would be to start building a portfolio during your first year. That way, by the time you graduate you have your strongest pieces in it. Portfolios really make you stand out as a candidate.

What is one part you miss about UW-Eau Claire?

I miss living life differently every semester. If a semester is extremely difficult, you can be proud of yourself at the end of it and see everything that you accomplished.

“Start building a portfolio during your first year. That way, by the time you graduate you have your strongest pieces in it.”

Jeff Hainlen

Class of 2006



Consumer Brands Project
Manager
Surly Bikes
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS- The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire prides itself on continuing to develop students into people who follow their dreams. Jeff Hainlen is a perfect example of a UW-Eau Claire alumnus who was able to do just that. After receiving his degree in history with a minor in journalism in 2006, Jeff headed off to China for a year to teach English. He truly believes that without the skills he gained at UW-Eau Claire he wouldn't have been able to make such a daring leap into the real world. After returning from China, Jeff was able to land a job that many only dream of, working for Surly Bikes in Minneapolis - a company that allows dogs in the office and frequent group bike rides. His career has taken off as a consumer brands project manager. Jeff has been so happy with where life has taken him as a graduate of UW-Eau Claire that he was gracious enough to share his story and offer advice to future graduates.

Why is it important for you to do an interview like this?

It is so important to me that people know that UW-Eau Claire is a great school. I decided on a college last minute and UW-Eau Claire was a random pick. But I wanted a smaller feel, and after walking around for an hour I knew I wanted to go there. If I didn't have the experiences I did while in college, I don't think I would have had the confidence to go to China and then come back to the US and start a career. I miss the school and what it did for me and I hope other students end up feeling the same way.

How did UW-Eau Claire help you use "the power of AND"?

Before I chose my minor in journalism, I was just a history major and I wasn't even considering studying anything in the field of communication. However, through the advice of my family, I decided to try it out. The university exposed me to something I didn't even realize I was interested in, but then I got super into it. I loved the classes I was able to take through the communication and

journalism department and I think they made me a much more effective professional at my current job. I was encouraged to continue to explore my love for history while also taking on this new minor that I became really interested in.

Besides your education at UW-Eau Claire, are there any other factors that helped prepare you for your career?

One major stepping stone was having a history internship. I had always thought I had wanted to work in a museum,

but having that internship made me realize that was not what I wanted to do. I think it is so important to explore opportunities in both your major and minor to really get a feel for what you like. Also, taking a year in China helped me explore new opportunities and learn about myself. I think travel can really open up a world of possibilities, and I would encourage people to do something unstructured and

fun after graduation so they don't just rush into a career they may not end up liking.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking about studying communication at UW-Eau Claire?

I would tell them to go for it! In the real world, good communicators are a hot commodity. There are too many people nowadays who still don't know how to communicate professionally, but UW-Eau Claire will ensure you are not one of those people. No matter what, good writing and communication skills will transfer over into your career. I work for a bike company, but I still have to use these skills every day. They also help outside of work with community advocacy.

"There are too many people nowadays who still don't know how to communicate professionally, but UW-Eau Claire will ensure you are not one of those people."

Written by: Erin Finneman
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Elizabeth Knight

Class of 2005



Lead Consultant
Aplomb PR
Wausau, WI



WAUSAU, WI –With a bachelor’s degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations in hand, and a drive for helping others in her heart, Elizabeth Knight got to work right out of college in 2005. Working in Eau Claire after graduation with a nonprofit for a couple of years, Elizabeth eventually wanted to spread her wings and see what else she could get her hands into. After some years as a communication director with a startup company, Knight understood her talent and drive could be used more effectively; leading to the founding of her own public relations and marketing firm, Aplomb PR.

Why did you choose UW-Eau Claire?

I was choosing between a few universities in the Midwest. I had a wonderful experience touring the UW-Eau Claire campus. The professors I met and the class sizes I was going to be in really set UW-Eau Claire apart from others because it all made me feel comfortable and not overwhelmed. I was excited about the opportunities and experiences that would be available to me.

What is some advice you would give to an incoming CJ major?

If all you do is focus on getting the 120 credits to graduate, you will regret it. Do not worry about checking off the boxes to graduate, and instead take some extra classes that focus on your vision of a career or your passions. The one thing I regret looking back is not taking additional business and graphic design classes because it would have helped today when running Aplomb PR. Remember to take advantage of all the resources that the university offers; you are paying for it. Also, keep an open mind. Just because you have your heart set on something today does not mean it cannot change tomorrow. Do not be afraid to make a mistake. You will learn more from your mistakes than your victories. It sometimes takes a few bad ideas to find the really good one that sticks.

What did you do right out of college?

Having an internship my junior and senior years with a nonprofit in Eau Claire allowed the opportunity for a full-time position after graduation. The organization invested time in me, which helped me grow my experience in PR. This is why internships are so important in the world of communication and journalism, they give you experience and connections.

What was it like creating Aplomb PR?

It really was a giant leap of faith for me to abandon a secure job and go off on my own. I had a vision of what I wanted to do and a strong client base to start from, so I went from there. The opportunity presented itself and I had to nurture it. It certainly was not easy.

What is a normal day like running Aplomb PR?

It is busy! I take the lead on all projects so being that I am a one-woman band, I have to be skilled in many traits and be able to juggle many things at once. But, for the things that I cannot handle or services that are not my strengths, such as graphic design and web development,

I turn to a trusted team of people who can support the project. That is also another lesson to learn; find what you are good at and run with it. You cannot be an expert at everything. But there are others out there who are experts in what you are not. So, utilize the networks and relationships you build.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Well like most people I wanted to be a lot of different things. First I thought I was going to be a veterinarian and then a teacher. But, as I got older I realized that I had a gift for communicating and interacting with people. That is what careers are all about, find what you are naturally good and passionate about; then learn how to make a living from it.

“Find what you are naturally good and passionate about, then learn how to make a living from it.”

Written by: Ben Fisher
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Matthew Bodden

Class of 2004



Sales Operations Division
Hearth & Home Technologies
Lakeville, MN



LAKEVILLE, Minn. – Matthew Bodden graduated in 2004 with a degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations. After graduation, he worked as a real estate appraiser in the Eau Claire area and then transitioned to life in the Twin Cities to work in sales for an industrial launderer. Shortly after he moved to a financial analyst role, and currently, he is working at Hearth & Home Technologies – the largest fireplace manufacturer in the country. In this position, Matthew works in the sales operations division where he comes up with ways to help the company sell more and be more efficient. In his free time Matthew enjoys coaching for his young sons' various sports teams. With three boys, ages two, five, and seven, and a baby girl on the way, Matthew enjoys spending time with his wonderful family.

Did you always know you wanted to study mass communication?

No, actually when I started school I didn't know what I wanted to do – and to be honest I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up. I was eventually drawn to public relations because, to me, it was a way to help shape the message. Public relations is different from advertising. In advertising you are trying to sell a product, but in PR you're trying to create a connection with people. I enjoyed the creativity of it and it gave me the feeling that I could use my skills to really help people.

How did the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's program prepare you for your career?

The public relations program taught me to work hard to get results. It would get frustrating having to revise over and over again. Once I was able to produce a finished product that I knew was completed to the best of my ability, the sense of accomplishment and pride in my work was very rewarding.

In your opinion, what made your learning experiences at UW-Eau Claire unique?

I liked that we got to work with real-world clients and learn in a very hands-on way. My favorite project from school was when my class got to design a public relations campaign for the then brand new children's museum in

downtown Eau Claire. It was very exciting to work on a project that had real outcomes and could actually affect the people living in the area.

“The skills I learned while studying public relations at UW-Eau Claire are very versatile. That gave me room to move outside of the field of public relations and still be qualified for a multitude of other jobs.”

What skills have you found to be the most valuable for someone in your field?

Attention to detail is always vital. The most important thing, I think, is the ability to come up with creative ideas. Originality is essential. What you do in public

relations will morph our society, so make sure you're doing something you can be proud of. I feel that UW-Eau Claire really helped me to identify and expand upon my creative skills.

What advice can you give someone considering a career in communication?

Be flexible. The reason I've moved away from a career in the public relations field in the traditional sense is because the jobs just weren't in the area I wanted to live in. My wife is from Eau Claire and we wanted to stay close by. The skills I learned while studying public relations at UW-Eau Claire are very versatile. That gave me room to move outside of public relations and still be qualified for a multitude of other jobs.

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

The best part of my job is seeing results. It's very rewarding to see a project that I've worked hard on pay off and make a difference.

Written by: Samantha Greener
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Rebecca Jewell

Class of 2015



Development Specialist
National Multiple Sclerosis
Society-Wisconsin Chapter
Hartland, WI



HARTLAND, Wis. – Life is moving pretty quickly for former public relations student Rebecca Jewell. After her May 2015 graduation from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, she took a job in sales. However, her interests were in communication analytics and politics, and she quickly learned that sales was not a good fit for her. After speaking to some fellow Blugold alumni, Rebecca applied for and got hired in her current position. Since August, Rebecca has been working at the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Using skills she learned in the communication and journalism department at UW-Eau Claire, Rebecca has been excelling in her role and recently received a promotion.

What were some challenges you faced when entering the workforce?

I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do after graduation, but because of my involvement in Student Senate at UW-Eau Claire, I thought I might pursue a political path. I also enjoyed marketing and public relations, so I applied for everything and accepted the first job offer I received. I worked there for about a month before I realized I didn't like it. One of my former classmates told me about the position at the MS Society, and I thought I'd give it a try. I absolutely love it. In the non-profit sector you have a chance to do a little bit of everything. They know I have a political background, so I often work on advocacy or government-related projects. I didn't know I wanted to work in the nonprofit sector but now I don't think I want to leave it.

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

UW-Eau Claire taught me to work hard and to produce high quality work. Those are things I think about every day. In my position I proofread a lot of pieces that have errors. To do your work correctly and to do it well is the most important thing that I learned in the program.

Is there anything you wish you had done while you were at UW-Eau Claire?

I had a lot of experience entering the workforce, but I wish I would have tried harder to find even more opportunities while I was in school because they are available. If you don't look for those experiences, you won't have them. I wish I would have taken advantage of more while I was there.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is the reason behind the work that we do. The day-to-day work is not very structured, so I can be handed any task at any moment. Sometimes it can be overwhelming, but if you remember the purpose behind it, that you're working for people with multiple sclerosis and to someday find a cure for that, it's very rewarding.

No matter what type of work you're doing in the nonprofit sector, there is always a reason for it, which is very important.

“Do the best you can now while you're still in school because that work ethic is going to matter when you're in the field.”

Do you have any words of wisdom to give students entering the communication industry?

I have two pieces of advice, but they might contradict each other. First, no task is too big or too small. Whether it is taking the lead

on a project or taking someone to the airport, lending a hand whenever you can gets noticed. It's just as important to do the little things. That dedication stands out to people and will get you far. The second thing is that you have to be your own advocate. If there is a project or a task you want to do, be vocal about that. Don't be afraid to share your opinions. If you don't, you're going to be given things you don't want to do, and you're going to miss out on things you would have been great at. Those two things were what got me promoted in seven months, and I think they will get you extremely far.

Written By: Jenny Grokowsky
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Catherine Wanzer

Class of 2012



**Marketing Communications
Specialist
Quad/Graphics
Milwaukee, WI**



MILWAUKEE - When Catherine Wanzer graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 2012, she was excited and thrilled, yet nervous to see what the big wide world had to offer her. Immediately, she jumped into a job working for a nut and chocolate company, only to be laid off after a year with the company. She wouldn't let this get her down and she pursued a new job with a non-profit, only to meet the same fate two years later. Catherine's determination and outgoing personality brought her to Quad/Graphics in Milwaukee, where she is currently living out her "dream job."

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

One of the best things UW-Eau Claire did for me is give me a multitude of opportunities in the form of study abroad. I can't tell you how much that experience prepared me for the real world and everyday situations I deal with now. I feel like I'm ready for anything because of that opportunity. UW-Eau Claire has made me a very well-rounded person, and a very hard worker. One achievement I wear with pride, is my writing skills. The one skill I bring that I am continuously complimented on is my writing skills.

Where are you currently working, and what are you doing there?

I currently work for Quad/Graphics in Milwaukee as a Marketing Communications Specialist. Some people are surprised at that, as my major is in journalism with an emphasis in broadcast. I now get to write material that over 24,000 employees get to see, and I also get to design those materials and have a lot of creative fun with it. I can honestly say this is my dream job, although I haven't been here a full year yet. I never knew I would like working for a big corporation, but I have a wide range of duties, providing a lot of variety in my day-to-day responsibilities.

Written by: Hailey Hoffmann
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How difficult was the transition from college to "adult" life?

First things first, there are no spring breaks in the corporate world. I learned to grow up rather quickly in the past four years, as this is my third job, each being in a completely different realm than the one before it. I've utilized the art of meal planning, as well as having a schedule to keep myself on track. Although it was quite an adjustment, it's definitely something everyone can do. It just takes some time, but I promise you'll get there.

What is one piece of advice you have for current communication and journalism majors?

Whatever you do, don't compromise who you are to fit in. At my first job fresh out of college, I hid at my desk;

nobody even knew who I was. I wanted to do my work, and sit on the sidelines. I soon realized this wasn't who I was at all. My best advice is to continue being yourself, and never try to change that or be something else for a job. If you're outgoing and energetic, keep doing it. Do everything you

can to make people remember you; just don't do anything too crazy.

What is one thing you know now that you wish you had known during your time at UW-Eau Claire?

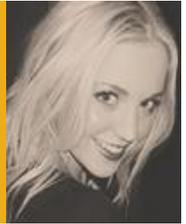
You should be networking at all times. The one thing I regret most is that I didn't get out more and network with people in the Eau Claire community. I've learned that once you get out into the real world, it's not always about how great of a candidate you are for a job, but who else you know. So definitely go out and make sure people know who you are. You will really be thankful for it in the long run. I would also encourage current students to get themselves out there and pursue internships. It's one of the things I wish I had done more of. The skills you learn will only help you as you make your way into the real world.

Clair Casey

Class of 2012



Account Executive
Havas Formula
New York, New York



NEW YORK - The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire helps its students create visions for themselves, and that is what has helped Clair Casey achieve her big dreams. A 2012 graduate, Clair used a combination of internship experiences, persistence, and vision to launch her career in public relations. Clair knew she always wanted to work in New York, and landed an internship with a national agency right after graduating from UW-Eau Claire. She is currently an account executive in the Lifestyle division for Havas Formula, a public relations agency in New York.

What are your main responsibilities and your favorite part of your job?

At Havas Formula, I work with the press to secure coverage for my clients, monitor trends, and find ways to insert the brands I work with in relevant and timely conversations, while handling client issues and concerns. I work with my team on projects and against deadlines while trying to produce the best content possible. My favorite part of my job is coming up with larger initiatives for clients and seeing those through to fruition, whether it is an activation, campaign idea, or a media pitch. This agency allows for an abundance of creativity, and it's great to be able to explore those creative ideas.

What are your three most valuable takeaways from UW-Eau Claire that have helped you the most?

Get involved. UW-Eau Claire is an awesome school that allows all students to be involved in the academic community, if they choose to do so. During my time there, I was able to take part in PRSSA, work at the university's news bureau, study abroad in Milan, and intern at the local Red Cross. Use the ample resources provided for you at UW-Eau Claire to create a robust background of experiences to your advantage. I was able to leverage the internships and roles I had at the university for other internships, which later turned into jobs. Finally, UW-Eau Claire helped teach me to learn how to learn, as

straightforward as that sounds. College is a measurement of your aptitude to learn. Most skills you hone in on will carry over into any career you choose, even if it isn't public relations. These skills include attention to detail, organization, effective communication, and time management.

What was your favorite part about the communication and journalism department at UW-Eau Claire?

The small class sizes were one of my favorite parts of UW-Eau Claire in general. As for the communication and journalism department, I think its professors and academic advisers are particularly invested in students' futures. Professors I studied under in the CJ department worked to make sure students were prepared for the next step.

What advice do you have for soon-to-be CJ graduates on the job hunt?

Be persistent. Don't let the times you hear "no" deter you from landing your dream job, whatever that may be. Let every job interview, writing test and phone call serve as a learning opportunity.

Any recommendations for students considering a major in communication and journalism?

Set a goal for yourself and create a plan to achieve it. Don't be afraid to dream big and exhaust all the tools and resources made available to you. Looking back, there were so many accessible opportunities at UW-Eau Claire, so don't be afraid to put yourself out there and learn all that you can.

“Set a goal for yourself and create a plan to achieve it! Don't be afraid to dream big and exhaust all the tools and resources made available to you.”

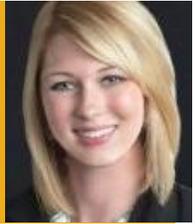
Written by: Sarah Hunter
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Erica Rasmussen

Class of 2014



Account Coordinator
Svinicki Association
Management, Inc.
Milwaukee, WI



MILWAUKEE - While Erica spent her time at The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire training with PR traditionalism in mind, her career has expanded beyond those roots. A strong background in PRSSA and networking mindfulness led Erica to her current work in organizational management and event planning for Svinicki Association Management, inc. in Milwaukee.

How did UW-Eau Claire's PR major prepare you for your current career?

The major itself was pretty great. I was a big member and supporter of PRSSA, and that actually got me a lot of experience as well. Really just the connections with the professors – networking among the department was really helpful. They're there when you need to talk, and are able to explain what PR will be like in the real world. There's a difference between traditional PR, and new, up-and-coming PR. The major itself is fairly expansive, and relied pretty heavily for me on traditional PR concepts. I was able to get more digital media skills and new-age PR from extracurricular programs such as PRSSA.

In event planning, what would you say your day-to-day looks like?

I plan three major conferences per year, so it's just details, details, details. You start off with getting your hotel booked and theme done, and it's an umbrella concept from there. You pick out the big stuff and it continues until the day of the event when you're making sure the coffee gets there on time. It keeps you on your toes -- you can do the same conference for ten years in a row and it might seem like clockwork, but there are always unique situations without fail.

How do you balance work and your personal life?

This is a well-timed question because I'm actually struggling with that right now. I do have a lot going on at work so I tend to get a little overwhelmed. You have to make up your mind that you're not going to work twelve

hours a day. A mistake that I made was putting my work email on my cell phone. I would stress not doing that because you have to leave it at the office. The people who need you have your number in case of an emergency, and you can make that clear to your clients and boss. It tends to give me a lot of anxiety always having my work with me.

What would you say has been the most exciting or interesting part of your current job?

Seeing it all come together. Right now we work on some of these events six to eight months in advance. After finalizing all the details, the most satisfying part is going to the event and seeing it all play out. My own personal mantra with event planning is that a really smooth event takes preparation. If your speaker is standing with a mic in their hand, you're behind them with an extra set of batteries on hand. Seeing it go smoothly shows all that time preparing and planning hasn't gone to waste.

What did you do immediately after you graduated?

It took me about three months to find a job after graduation, and I got a contract temp job with Kohl's corporate. If you move to the Milwaukee area, it seems like almost everyone here has touched Kohl's in some way. But it was hard finding a job – I personally sent out about 200 applications.

Do you have any advice for students?

Join PRSSA, especially as a PR major. Companies care about that experience in the field. It does make a difference when you're applying to jobs. And do not be afraid to network; I got my State Farm internship in college at a PRSSA event. I noticed a PRSA badge on a guy at Starbucks, and started talking to him. I bought him a coffee, and as it turns out he was the vice president of PR for State Farm corporate.

“Join PRSSA, especially as a PR major. Companies care about that experience in the field – it does make a difference when you're applying to jobs.”

Written by: Zack Katz
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Paige Skeie

Class of 2013



Project Coordinator
Sport Ngin
Minnetonka, MN



MINNETONKA, MN – Paige Skeie has never woken up and felt like not going work. Her employment has led her to Minneapolis, Minnesota where she works at the company of her dreams - not with coworkers, but with friends. Paige is a Project Coordinator for Sport Ngin, a software company that creates web applications for different levels of sports organizations. For Paige, it's a company that has provided her with exciting, meaningful, and rewarding work.

How did you spend your time at UW-Eau Claire?

Like most students I was undecided for a while. I was interested in graphic design but wasn't sure what career that would lead me to. I decided to major in public relations and minor in web design so I could do something that would make a difference. I joined PRSSA in my junior year and became part of the Executive Board which made me feel way more involved with the school.

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

UW-Eau Claire prepared me for my job by teaching me how to communicate effectively through word and speech. At first I was uncomfortable with public speaking until I took some public speaking courses at the university. They turned out to be my some of my favorite classes throughout my college years. Although my capstone was very challenging, learning how to build a communication plan gave me essential skills that I use in my career every day.

What was the job search process like for you?

Even though I worked very hard, I was also very lucky. I got involved with some UW-Eau Claire alumni who I eventually got to know pretty well from a laidback interview at Mogie's Pub. This eventually led to a part time job I was able to do from the comfort of my own home. After graduation my part time job turned into a full-time position and I became a Content Migration Specialist.

I was gradually given more responsibilities like working with higher level clients. I also started managing my own team of content migration specialists, as well as their payroll. After about ten months of hard work I finally became a project coordinator and now work daily with 20 great people.

Is there anything exciting or interesting about your job?

My company is really awesome. The culture is great. We work with over 500,000 sports teams, leagues, clubs, and associations around the world. I also occasionally get tickets to see sporting events around the area, which is a great perk of the job.

What different types of skills do you use at your job?

It's important that I'm able to explain things technically to people within the company as well to the clients. Communicating effectively is crucial because I spend a great deal of each day talking on the phone and writing emails. I also work with multiple

departments to familiarize clients with our website content and software. One department I work with on a daily basis is my sales team. I give them updates and mention any potential issues that may arise for each project.

What advice would you give to someone going into your field?

Absolutely take management classes. Learning how to allocate resources and timelines will be a very valuable skill in the professional world. I'm currently planning on receiving my project management certification because I want to be better at what I do. Also, you have to join organizations. Becoming involved allows you to get great experience and make valuable connections. By joining organizations I was able to associate myself with a group of people and make a difference.

“By joining organizations I was able to associate myself with a group of people and make a difference.”

Written By: Jimmy Lavorato
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Heather Hejna

Class of 2013



Project Manager
Gabriel deGrood Bendt
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS - Heather Hejna moved on from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire to working as the project manager at Gabriel deGrood Bendt, more frequently called GdB. GdB is a small, full service marketing agency with less than 50 employees. Located in Minneapolis, Heather wears many hats at GdB as the link between each team, helping to make sure everybody is moving in the right direction and that all of the media comes out integrated and on time. Heather also works in production where she makes sure their ads are correctly placed.

How long did it take you to get a job after you graduated from UW-Eau Claire?

After school it took me about one and a half months to get a job at Russell Herder. However, I had also been applying for six months previous to that. I do not mean to scare people, though. Truthfully, applying for jobs around the time you graduate is all about the timing. I think that six months was a little too early to start the process because often the places you are applying to will want you to start immediately, and that is hard to do when you are still in school.

What is the best, and the hardest, part about working at Gabriel deGrood Bendt?

The best part about my job is how many opportunities I have to work with, and learn from, coworkers who have been invested in their team for years, some even for decades. Being able to move around the agency keeps me on my toes and allows me to learn the ins and outs of many departments. The hardest part about my job is working with difficult personalities. Occasionally you run across a picky client which is why it is good to have a fire drill, a fail-proof plan for working with difficult personalities. That way you get things done the way the client wants but still on time.

What is the best way to make contacts in the communications or marketing field?

Truthfully, any way you can. I suggest joining PRSSA if you are not already a member. It is a great organization for meeting people and learning skills. Go to any tours or events held by people you think you may want to work for at some point. Send them an email later. The point is that you have to let somebody know you are interested—and actually do. Saying you will get a hold of them “later” does not do you any good. Be brave, get out there.

“Internships are a great way to learn what you are passionate about as well as find those things you may dislike about any potential job before you get too committed.”

What did you learn from UW-Eau Claire that has stuck with you or that you found useful outside of school?

AP style, definitely. I also found that advisers were incredibly useful tools for resources. I retained, and use, much of what I learned in my public relations classes and I suggest taking the Introduction to Journalism class. My internships were useful too.

From them I learned what I did and did not like about the different aspects of the communication field. Career swapping is hard, try not to do it if you do not have to. Internships are a great way to learn what you are passionate about as well as find those things you may dislike about any potential job before you get too committed.

Do you have any pointers for current or soon-to-be communications students?

Get involved. Join organizations, volunteer at events, get an internship or three. You have to take an interest and throw yourself out there. Start networking and exploring now. You will be glad you did when you are applying for jobs later on.

Written by: Catlin Miller
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Carlos Gorina

Class of 2014



Digital Marketing Specialist
Barcelona, Spain



BARCELONA, SPAIN – The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire supports a wide diversity of students and Carlos Gorina is a prime example. Carlos grew up in Spain, moved to Eau Claire as a teenager, and graduated from Regis High School. He chose to extend his student visa and attend a university in the United States. He considered many schools and chose to attend UW-Eau Claire to major in marketing and public relations. After graduating, he sought a change of pace and warmer weather. Carlos spent a year in Miami before his visa expired and he moved back to Spain. Carlos has obtained a variety of experience since graduation and is working hard to find his dream job.

Why did you choose to attend the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire?

I toured many schools after graduating high school. I chose to attend UW-Eau Claire because there was a wide variety of diversity in the well-rounded professors. This was different from many of the other schools I toured. I found that the professors are always willing to find a way to help students. The beautiful campus was also a good selling point.

Is there anything you wish you would have known when you were in school?

During my junior year, I fell into a pattern of staying in my comfort zone. One thing I would tell someone who is entering college would be to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people - try new things and do not be stagnant.

What did you do after graduation?

After graduation, I moved to Miami, Florida and began working as a community manager. I worked with social media, SEO/SEM (search engine optimization/ search engine marketing), and campaigns using Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Instagram for up to 55 clients. The job required a variety of skills, including customer service. I also needed to explain the strategies we developed and how our services benefited clients.

How tough was it finding a job?

After graduation, I did not have a difficult time finding a job. After leaving Miami, I moved back to Barcelona and took up freelancing to gain experience. At this time, I am looking for a full-time job but I am being very particular about the job that I decide to accept. I participate in three to seven interviews per week, looking for the right job for me. I am not willing to settle for a job that is not stable. I need a job where I can gain experience in marketing and public relations that will allow me to continue developing myself.

Do you have any advice for someone who is graduating?

My advice for a new graduate is to do as much networking as possible. When I was done with school I was so used to doing a variety of things it was easy to use that momentum to obtain a job. It is a lot of work sending resumes, cover letters, doing interviews, and constantly following up with potential employers. New graduates should use their momentum to find a dream job.

How do you manage your work and personal life?

As a triathlete, I work by objectives.

In order to maintain my work and personal life, I need to have a routine. My routine revolves around an eight-eight-eight rule where I get eight hours of sleep, eight hours of work, and eight hours of personal time. If one of my priorities demands more of my time, I sacrifice sleep.

What is your dream job?

My dream job would be working for a company like Red Bull. I would like to work in the marketing department developing their digital marketing campaigns, sporting events, and social media. I would like a job that will provide me an opportunity to travel and network. I like the idea of working for a large, eco-friendly company that is literally everywhere.

“Get out of your comfort zone and meet new people - try new things, and do not be stagnant.”

Written By: Laura Mulhern
mulhernl@uwec.edu

Collin Bourgeois

Class of 2012



Help Desk Support
Exelis
Salt Lake City, UT



SALT LAKE CITY- Collin Bourgeois is not your typical public relations graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Unlike the majority of students, Collin took three years off in the middle of schooling, which happened to be just what he needed to succeed in the future. Collin graduated with a degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations, and though he does not work in public relations, he still uses the fundamental skills that he learned through his course work.

How did your experience at UW-Eau Claire help shape who you are?

When I came to UW-Eau Claire I wasn't what you would call a 'grade A' student. I had many priorities in my life and school was not one of them. After struggling through classes and spending thousands of dollars on an education that I did not value, I decided to leave school. The three years I was out of school I had time to think about what I needed to change. My life was consumed by a culture of partying, when I should have been surrounding myself with people who wanted to be part of a culture of success. When I came back to the campus many of the professors at the university helped me develop my attitude toward becoming the successful person that I look at into the mirror every day.

How has being a communication major helped you in your job today?

It helps me every day. Though I do not currently work in a communication field, the skills that I was taught while attending UW-Eau Claire have been transferable not only to the work place but also to everyday life. I went into communications because it was a very general field, and I knew I could open myself to a lot of different job fields. I also value strong and personal relationships and thought I would enjoy the classes. My job may not require me to write press releases or media advisories, but I still do a lot of writing and face to face communication on a daily basis.

I know I would not be as successful of an employee or as good of a husband without these skills.

What is some advice you would give new students coming to UW-Eau Claire

You want to get yourself around a culture of success. You want to build relationships with people who will support you, instead of dragging you down. Be around people who truly want to be successful and there is no way that you won't want to be either. You find these people by taking advantage of as many opportunities to get involved around campus. Whether it is joining a club to becoming an RA in

the dorms, not only will you have great experiences but you will start building relationships with people. You never know what lies around the corner.

Do you have any advice on how to get a job?

The bachelor's degree is becoming essentially a high school diploma to many employers now a days. Many

people have them so they are becoming very saturated. You need to be able to stand out in the crowd. Employers want to be able to see things that you have done. They want to be able to read your writings or look at your photography. I would suggest creating and keeping a collection of items that you create so that you can present them to employers. Internships are very valuable now a days as well, so get one of those if you can.

What is one thing you look forward to at your job every day?

I love to work with computers and technology, so being able to do that is very enjoyable. I also like being able to have relationships with the people I work both in the office and outside as well.

Written by: Daniel Pfab
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“You want to get yourself around a culture of success. You want to build relationships with people who will support you, instead of dragging you down.”

Brenna Long

Class of 2008



**Crime Prevention
Specialist
Menomonie Police Department
Menomonie, WI**



MENOMONIE – Brenna Long’s story certainly isn’t traditional. After completing her major in speech therapy in her junior year at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire she decided that speech therapy wasn’t for her. Instead of finding a new major, she took her love of communications from leading the Eau Claire Irish Dance student organization and minored in public relations. She spent her senior year cramming the minor into two semesters. Since then she’s danced her way to a career with the Menomonie police department where she does community outreach and educates the public through presentations and media relations.

Do you have any advice for anyone considering working in public relations or communication fields?

Writing and being able to write effectively will take you really far. So much of what I do, and what you do in this field, is based on writing. It really becomes your most important skill. Also just always be open to opportunities. I got to where I am because I kept taking any opportunity I could even if it wasn’t always exactly what I wanted. Sometimes that unpaid internship or minimum wage job will be what opens the door to something else.

Is there anything you learned through your career that you wish you would have learned as a student?

One thing I’ve really learned in my career is to take any chance you get. Every opportunity that arises is another opportunity to get your message out there. When I’m asked to do presentations I find a way to relate law enforcement to it because every opportunity like that is a chance to further our mission. The same can be said for other careers, just take those opportunities to spread your message.

Which communication classes helped you most with your career?

My writing for public relations class was huge, I use what I learned in that class every day. I’m constantly writing press releases and news articles and giving presentations. Knowing how to write, specifically for communicating with the media and the community, are really important to what I do. Also, I don’t know how much I use the skills on a daily basis, but I really value what I learned in the media ethics course because it made me think about what information I’m releasing and why I’m putting it out there.

How did your time as a student at UW-Eau Claire help prepare you for your career?

My time at UW-Eau Claire really helped shape my career path. I started the Eau Claire Irish Dance student organization while I was a student. Running and promoting that helped me find my passion for communications. Having the ability to run organizations and connect with other resources on campus and in the community helped me find my niche in the outreach field and prepared me for what I do today.

What was your most exciting time as a student at UW-Eau Claire?

There was this moment of terror when I switched from communication science and disorders to communication and journalism. After I finished my first day of classes it felt exactly like where I was supposed to be. Secondly, my Irish dance group performed at Varsity Night Live and I was worried that everyone would think it was weird or wouldn’t like it, but they went nuts and everyone loved it. Most of the girls didn’t have any experience beyond what I had taught them and it was a really rewarding moment to see it all come full circle.

“Sometimes that unpaid internship or minimum wage job will be what opens the door to something else.”

Written by: Ty Randerson
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MENOMONIE - After taking her first college biology class, Gina Lawton quickly realized achieving a pre-med major was not the path for her. When her friend suggested enrolling in communication courses, Gina instantly found her calling and went on to pursue a double major in mass communication and psychology. Graduating a semester early, Gina took time to test out the human relations field in Eau Claire while saving money for a master's degree at UW-Stout. Gina was recently offered a position in UW-Stout's Applied Research Center where she applies her public relations and data advancement skills in a dual-based environment.

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

The liberal arts education I received at UW-Eau Claire has helped me become not only a good researcher, but an effective communicator as well. All classes, even if they're not pertinent to your major, teach you how to develop a story and communicate efficiently.

What is the most important advice you can give to an undergrad?

Take on as many opportunities as you can; look for internships, work on projects and create long-lasting relationships with your employers, professors and advisers. The most challenging aspect of job hunting was being told I had the interview and communication skills the company was looking for but lacked the experience. Make the most of your time in college by taking advantage of the opportunities presented to you.

Aside from academic advice, what do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?

Professors and advisers can prepare you, but no one can teach you exactly how to transition into adult life. Be sure to realize this time you have in school is one of the best times you will ever have. This is the last part of your life

where you will be with a group of people who are your age and after college you don't have the same opportunities to make friends and build relationships in a community like that. There are very few chances for me to associate with people outside of work. Not having that comfortable college foundation is difficult. Make the most of this accommodating environment while you can.

How tough was it finding a job after graduating with an undergraduate degree?

Finding a job was difficult because I didn't know where to start. I was always told you can do anything with a

communication degree, but because it's so vast, it can be overwhelming. Make sure you think ahead of time about the direction you want to take your major. When I didn't know where to turn, career services helped me out by looking over my resume and working on my interview skills. This definitely gave me the push I needed to find a career in a field I am interested in. Don't be disheartened if you graduate and

don't find a job immediately - you may find something you like more along the way. Continue chasing your dreams and try to refrain from being so hard on yourself.

What has been the best part of your job so far?

Seeing as I am a fairly new hire, I am still trying to figure out my role, but so far traveling is the biggest attraction. I have the opportunity to work with people throughout the UW System, and not only do I get to travel to different areas of the state, but I also get the opportunity to collaborate on big brand ideas and constantly see growth in my field. I love learning from my coworkers and allowing my hobbies to show through in my work. Each day is something different and it keeps me excited to see what the future holds.

Written by: Kendall Ruchti
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“Don't be disheartened if you graduate and don't find a job immediately- you may find something you like more along the way.”

Amber Haack

Class of 2007



Customer Success Manager
Springbot
Atlanta, GA



ATLANTA - Amber Haack graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in the spring of 2007 with a degree in mass communication - public relations, and a minor in sociology. She is currently working in Atlanta, Georgia for Springbot, an e-commerce marketing start-up. During her time at UW-Eau Claire, Amber played for the women's fast pitch softball team and was part of the team that took third-place in the 2007 DIII national tournament. She attributes the softball team to much of her success in her professional career as it taught her time management, hard work and dedication. While on the softball team she acquired many friendships that will last a lifetime.

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

The CJ department taught me how to create meaning in my writing by connecting specific brands and styles to different people. Being in the workforce for several years, I believe that writing is a lost art, so I challenge all of my team members to take on writing projects and continue to improve their writing abilities. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Communication & Journalism department set the groundwork for me to be an effective verbal and written communicator, which has helped me tremendously in my professional career.

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

First, never stop learning. You should be able to learn one new thing every day, and if you can't, you're doing it wrong. Second, always keep writing. You can always find ways to improve your skills. Third, adapt to new technology quickly. The world is moving at a fast pace. You have to keep up and stay ahead of the curve. Knowing technology is key. Finally, set goals for your future. The most important facet of success is having a vision.

Written by: Samuel Fisher
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How tough was it finding a job after graduation?

Graduating in the spring of 2007 was a very difficult time to start looking for work as the economy was in a rough state and many companies were not hiring. I was fortunate to land a job as an office manager for Gammoth, a small technology start-up, back in my hometown of Madison, Wisconsin. After being at Gammoth for a year and learning website management, SEO, blogging, and creating marketing collateral, I ventured down to Atlanta, Georgia with one of my best friends to see what the South had to offer. Initially I took on serving jobs at various restaurants in Atlanta to

get by while I looked for a full-time job using my marketing and PR skills. In 2008 I landed a contract position at Unisource Worldwide, and through hard work, I landed a full-time position as a marketing specialist. Through her five

years there, I was promoted into two more roles before I moved on to Springbot in late 2013.

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

It's not always what you know, but who you know. Build meaningful relationships in all that you do - with friends, professors, family, co-workers, teams, etc. You never know who will be able to help you throughout your career and who you may be able to help some day. Validate the relationships that you build throughout your career, there is no such thing as too much networking.

What is the most exciting part of your job?

I currently lead a team of nine young professionals at Springbot. Seeing the growth of my team has been very rewarding. I think my ability to help young professionals succeed and grow in their careers has been the highlight of my time at Springbot.

“Never stop learning. You should be able to learn one new thing every day, and if you can't, you're doing it wrong.”

Gina Loeffel

Class of 2013



**International Marketing
Specialist
Greenheck Fan Corporation
Wausau, WI**



WAUSAU – When Gina Loeffel graduated with a degree in mass communication: public relations, she knew she wanted to do something in her field that she loved. What she didn't know was that she would end up working in the industrial manufacturing industry. After applying throughout the spring for jobs, Gina received a call from Greenheck Fan Corporation the week of graduation to set up a second interview. Soon after she walked across the stage at graduation, Greenheck hired Gina for a summer internship, which turned into her now full time job. Gina is now an International Marketing Specialist at Greenheck Fan Corporation in Wausau, WI.

What are some skills that you gained from the CJ department that you feel made you stand out?

The courses within the CJ department really allowed me to learn an array of different experiences. The classes go across the board, which helped me in my career since I'm not so much doing PR as I am marketing. The jobs today are very integrated and I felt well prepared going into my job even though it wasn't exactly what I expected.

What's the most important advice you can give someone who wants to get into your field?

Do a lot of internships, network, and get involved. That's how you're going to gain experience. Once you get into the workforce experience matters. Having the head knowledge is good, but having people bring in knowledge and new experience as a fresh set of eyes really helps. Making yourself personable and getting yourself out there will really help you gain insight into the company.

Do you have any advice for students entering the job market?

Don't feel like you have to settle, but don't hold yourself back to getting your dream job. Be realistic. I usually went for jobs with beginner to one or two years of experience. I started applying earlier than I should have, November, when I wasn't graduating until May. Companies aren't

really looking for spring graduates that early, they are looking for December graduates. But put out feelers and feel free to start early. The worst they can say is 'no we're not hiring now.' But sometimes they we will keep you on file.

Once you got your job, what were you most nervous about going into the "real world?"

For anyone who has never had a full-time job, you realize you have so much to learn from the company as a whole when you get hired. I wasn't familiar at all with the manufacturing industry, only with communications and how to write to a general audience and target. So when it came to actually working in the industry, I learned there are a lot of acronyms. Work culture is different in every job. Even if you change your job in the future, you will probably still be nervous about that too; it's normal.

What has been the most exciting part of your job?

Every day is different. I know what my responsibilities are but I'm not doing the same tedious tasks daily. I can change it up sometimes if I feel I'm working on one thing too much. We try different messages and marketing, which makes things less

exhausting. The people I work with are great too. It's a smorgasbord of personalities, which really helps me enjoy the job.

Do you have any advice for incoming freshman that might choose a communication and journalism major?

I think my advice would be to try and get as broad a spectrum of things as possible when you're taking your electives. I regret not doing a graphic design course. I was familiar with it but I wish I would have taken the opportunity to learn more. In my position now, I wish I had that creative mind. Anything that's of interest that you really want to try, do it. Try different things.

"Don't feel like you have to settle, but don't hold yourself back to only getting your dream job. Be realistic."

Written By: Anne Sandell
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WASHINGTON D.C. - Greg Brey took his experience from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and moved to Washington D.C. taking on a marketing position with a small and upcoming digital marketing agency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin called Keystone Click. After graduation, Greg knew that he wanted to experience a job outside of Wisconsin. It took patience and hard work, but he landed his second job after college on the East coast with Solar Energy Trade Shows (SETS). He is enjoying life in D.C. but says it is very different from Wisconsin.

How would you say UW-Eau Claire has prepared you for this career?

I would say it has helped me to be more professional. It's a cumulative collection between courses and internships, things learned outside the classroom as well. By "professional", I mean the ability to apply the knowledge we learned and apply it in different job environments. My internships also prepared me for my career. I had three internships throughout my career. I started at a TV company called the Sportsman Channel, then the golf course Hickory Hills in Eau Claire, and Pet Food Plus as well. The more experiences the better; anything to prepare you for the real world will help graduates in the long run.

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

My first point of advice is to keep an open mind to anything, and don't feel like you're entitled to anything. Straight out of college, getting a job making \$50,000 and full benefits isn't realistic, especially when you're likely going up against someone with more experience. My second point is to make sure you show them that you want the job. A resume gets you in the door, but after that it's about personality and if you want it enough. People can tell who wants "THE" job, versus who wants "A" job. My third point is networking. The networking connections that you make now that will help you in the future.

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

The most exciting thing about my job is that I get to travel. Being employed by a trade show company, I get to go to a majority of our shows in different states and cities. Another exciting thing is that every trade show is different and has different things going on. For example, last year Solar Power International (North America's largest solar trade show, managed by SETS) had Vice President Joe Biden speaking. There are also a lot of interesting companies at the shows. Since solar energy is an up and

coming technology, I get to learn a lot about different companies and interact with them on a daily and weekly basis.

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

I wish I would have known what networking really meant. I know now that it's about keeping the relationships you have with classmates on a personal and

professional level after you graduate, and continuing to make new meaningful relationships. Your fellow students might become your bosses someday, and your professors could potentially be your references. Those are valuable connections to have. You can go to as many events as you want and get a business card but that won't do anything for you. Keeping in touch and getting to know people will make the difference.

Do you enjoy living in D.C.?

There's a lot more going on overall, but I like it a lot so far. It's a new perspective and I enjoy discovering new places. There are a lot of opportunities here, and it's cool to be a part of a city that is always working.

"You can go to as many events as you want and get a business card, but that won't do anything for you. Keeping in touch and getting to know people will make the difference."

Alexa Erickson

Class of 2013



Senior Account Manager
CH Robinson Worldwide
Rochester, MN



ROCHESTER, MN- Having a degree in mass communication can take you in many different directions. Alexa Erickson had no idea where her degree would take her, but after a few years of working for different companies she discovered a job that challenged her in many different ways. Alexa is currently working as an account manager at a company called CH Robinson Worldwide, which is one of the world's largest third party logistics providers that companies use to move freight throughout the world. Alexa works side by side with one of their accounts operating with their medical, dental and veterinary locations moving freight and helping them improve their supply chain.

What are your main tasks at CH Robinson?

At CH Robinson, I work with one of our larger customer accounts, Patterson Companies. They have many vendors they work with, so I help them find ways of moving their freight to their hundreds of branches and distribution centers throughout the US. I am constantly working with different people throughout the US and have a lot of email and telephone communication with people.

Did the skills you've learned at UW-Eau Claire help you in your current job?

Oh absolutely. The communication program really helped me develop a skill of copy editing and communication styles. It is so important in any job to be able to communicate professionally. I think UW-Eau Claire, more specifically the communication and journalism department, helped me hone-in on those skills. The department had really helped me develop my style of writing. I actually have several co-workers ask me to proofread their emails before they send them.

Was it hard finding a job after graduation?

My first job out of college kind of fell into my lap. I had been working as a seasonal bank teller throughout college. My fiancé at the time (now husband) was working in the golf industry and received an offer to work as an assistant golf professional at a country club in the Twin Cities, and there happened to be an opening at the bank up there. I was lucky though. Sometimes, you really have to do some research and apply to many different jobs before you find one.

What or who inspired you the most after graduating from UW-Eau Claire?

My very first boss, Laura Weatherly was my greatest influence. She was such a strong, influential person and really helped

me to understand that you don't have to settle on anything in your career. If you think you deserve a raise, ask for it. If you want to have more responsibility or learn something new, ask for it. She taught me that you'll never know if you don't ask.

What is the most important piece of advice you can give to newly graduated students?

Be patient and don't just settle on the first job you accept. Just because it is your first job does not mean it needs to be your 'forever' job. You shouldn't dread going to your job, and if you do, it is time to start trying to find the next adventure. Seek out opportunities in which you can better yourself, both personally and professionally. Also, networking is very important and will usually help you find your career. I would definitely not have the job I currently have without networking like crazy right out of school.

Written by: Jena Sieckert
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"I would definitely not have the job I currently have without networking like crazy right out of school."

Danielle Green

Class of 2013



Marketing Strategist
Park City Credit Union
Merrill, WI



MERRILL – As if studying and working to earn a degree isn't enough of a challenge, Danielle Green managed to do it all while raising a family. The 2013 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire earned a degree in public relations and now resides in Merrill, Wisconsin with her husband and their two daughters. She hasn't skipped a beat since graduating, and continues to work hard as a marketing strategist while simultaneously working on getting her master's degree in business administration at Viterbo University.

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

I learned a lot about graphic design and understanding data, which are some of the main aspects of my job. Additionally, the writing classes were definitely huge as well in preparing me for life after college. I graduated with an English minor, and the combination of writing for all of my English classes, as well as all of the writing I did in the Writing for Public Relations class have been invaluable to me. I do a substantial amount of writing for work as far as press releases and updating our website. Learning how to write effectively and developing that experience has been very helpful.

What was your first job after graduating from UW-Eau Claire?

After graduating in December 2013, I was able to find a job fairly quickly in February of 2014 as a business development coordinator at Park City Credit Union. I was in charge of coordinating and running events, as well as reading donation requests.

Written by: Lauren Westermeyer
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What do you do currently?

I still work at Park City Credit Union, but since I started I have been promoted to marketing strategist. With that role, I work in the marketing department with a variety of responsibilities. I do the social media, update our website, collect and process different forms of data, and I am also in charge of creating all the graphics for our company.

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

I am very fortunate to have great support systems both at home and at work. I had both of my daughters while I was in school at UW-Eau Claire, and my husband and I have always been very supportive of each other. He has been a huge help as I'm juggling working at my job and working toward earning my master's degree. On top of that, everyone who I work with has been extremely supportive and helpful. I am lucky to work for a company that encourages me to further my education and helps me along the way. There are days when I have to take time off from work to go to La Crosse for school and the people I work with have been very understanding and want to see me succeed.

“Do not limit yourself based on what field you went to school for. It's a lot - working through school and then trying to find your career, but don't give up on yourself.”

What advice would you give to future students entering into the communication department?

Do not limit yourself based on what field you went to school for. It's a lot - working through school and then trying to find your career, but don't give up on yourself. You learn a lot of great skills during college, and you would be amazed how applicable they can be to a variety of different career paths. You might end up finding something that you love that you never would have imagined if you had limited yourself. I never pictured myself working at a financial institution and doing some of the things I am today, but I couldn't see myself anywhere else now.

Anna Moegenburg

Class of 2014



Digital Coordinator
Hiebing
Madison, WI



MADISON – Anna Moegenburg utilized her University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire education as a stepping stone for post-graduation success. Anna graduated with a public relations major and marketing communications comprehensive minor in 2014. Throughout college, she took advantage of unique internship experiences, such as creating several of her own internships, and dedicated time to building her professional portfolio and making lifelong connections. Anna currently serves as a digital coordinator for Hiebing, a Madison-based marketing agency, working on digital marketing, website creation and SEO. She was willing to share her experiences and advice regarding the current public relations field and how to benefit from your UW-Eau Claire education to build a platform for professional success.

Why does a public relations degree stand out to employers?

The interpersonal skills you develop earning a public relations degree provides you with enough confidence to pursue all career aspirations. The beauty of public relations is your adaptability, flexibility and relevance. Most of what you see in the media has likely been vetted through us – public relations professionals – and people don't realize how involved we are in their daily lives. The skills I learned from UW-Eau Claire prepared me for the basics of having a job, but my summer internship at FleishmanHillard taught me the real-world practical skills that I use daily.

What advice would you give yourself as a UW-Eau Claire freshman?

Grades are important but not break worthy. When I was a freshman, I didn't understand I was going to change my final destination more than a few times. Originally I had my eyes set on Paris, Chicago or New York. Big cities bring opportunity and a certain lifestyle. There definitely is an expectation graduates have of finding the perfect job immediately when that's usually not the case. As a public relations major, I am able to apply my skills anywhere in the world when the time is right.

How did the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) propel you forward?

PRSSA gave me the experience and mentor relationships to build my professional confidence. Through this valuable student organization I was able to learn about the little nuances of being a public relations strategist before entering the field, which ended up being crucial tactics that I use every day. Through PRSSA, I have also learned how to effectively manage and motivate your coworkers and clients not only as individuals, but also as a group.

What is one thing Hiebing does best?

Everyone at Hiebing is curious. We are encouraged to ask interactive questions and challenge norms. We function on the positive aspects of work and holding people up versus criticizing. There was a learning curve to succeeding in the real world. Hiebing success involves questioning logic, even if it is your own.

What would you like UW-Eau Claire students to know about post-graduation?

Eau Claire was my home for four years and I miss parts of being a college student like having the

flexibility to take a nap whenever you have a twenty minute break or not paying bills. Although once you adjust, so many exciting doors reopen that I shouldn't have closed in college. UW-Eau Claire's wonderful study abroad program is something I did not consider as much as I should have, which is an opportunity every student should take advantage of. Life after college has its own learning curve and you will realize that the hours you dedicate may be strenuous. But in the end seeing your hard work in action is worth the time and energy.

“Most of what you see in the media has likely been vetted through us – public relations professionals – and people don't realize how involved we are in their daily lives.”

Written by: Jessica Wicklund
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Emily Schultz

Class of 2014



**Editorial Assistant and
Community Outreach Manager**
22 Words
Minneapolis, Minnesota



MINNEAPOLIS – The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire can start students on a career path that they never even thought of having. Emily Schultz, a 2014 graduate found her calling when she took a chance and came to UW-Eau Claire. Emily is currently the Editorial Assistant and Community Outreach Manager for a company located in Uptown called 22 Words. 22 Words is a premier viral publisher. They publish anything on the web from cute and funny to serious and heartwarming. Their main goal is to free the world from boredom and spread happiness. Emily tells us a little bit about how a communication degree from UW-Eau Claire brought her to where she is now.

Why did you choose to pursue a communication degree?

Coming in as a freshman I felt a lot of pressure to pick a major, just like any new college student may feel. I knew that I was a personally extraverted person and things like graphics have always interested me. Finally I came across the idea of a communication major and it seemed like the perfect fit.

What is your favorite part about your job?

One of my favorite things about my job is that it's remote. I work out of the house 3-5 times a week. I had never experienced working out of the house before and now that I have, I absolutely love it. Another part of my job that I am really fascinated with is the social media management aspect of it. I have the opportunity to interact with people that can see one piece of content in multiple different aspects. It's great to get new ideas from other people and see how they might interpret something compared to how I interpret it.

How do you balance work and your personal life?

It's fairly easy for me to balance work and my personal life since my job gives me the opportunity to work from home. Since my job is social media based, one the biggest things I make sure to do is completely disconnect from technology for a few hours when I'm done with work.

How did the communication and journalism department here at UW-Eau Claire prepare you for the real world?

UW-Eau Claire provided me with a very diverse education in communication. We learned everything from journalism, to history of poetry, to publishing. There are so many different areas within the communication field that a certain area can be tailored to fit anyone. The more you know about each area, the better chance you will have at finding a job after you graduate.

What is your favorite memory of UW-Eau Claire?

My favorite memory is simply just being there. I loved the days where I could hang out with my friends on campus.

Everyone at Eau Claire is always so happy and friendly. Not to mention, the campus is beautiful. Out of all the schools I toured, I wouldn't have wanted to go anywhere else.

What advice can you give students looking for a career in your field?

Some advice that I can give students now is to not put so much pressure on themselves. Looking

back, I wish I wouldn't have put so much pressure on myself to find a job in my field right out of college. You don't need to find a job in your field right away. Everything will work out in the end. Please don't be afraid to look for jobs in uncommon places. At one point I was applying for jobs on craigslist. The jobs you apply for don't have to be jobs that are listed on a company's website. There are so many different opportunities out there, take advantage of all them.

“Don't be afraid to look for jobs in uncommon places. There are so many different opportunities out there, take advantage of all of them.”

Written by: Anna Wischmann
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Abby Nelson

Class of 2013



English Teacher
Peace Corps
Probištip, Macedonia



PROBIŠTIP, MACEDONIA – Most college graduates adjust to a new job - Abby adjusted to a new life. The public relations major and psychology minor had found her calling outside of a cubicle. After graduation Abby began the tedious process of applying for her next chapter, the Peace Corps. Packing up her belongings, she set out on a two-year journey to a country she had little knowledge of. Since then, Abby has been nothing short of innovative and involved while serving in the Peace Corps. I was fortunate to chat with her while she has been volunteering. We discussed her invaluable experiences from PR to the Peace Corps.

How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your post-graduate life?

UW-Eau Claire provided me with countless opportunities to get involved and figure out my future. I was able to volunteer with ESL tutoring, which developed my passion for helping others. One of my electives was CJ 301 Intercultural Communication, which was the perfect course to combine my love for culture and people. We were introduced to the Peace Corps in that class and it immediately sparked my interest.

Currently what are you doing in the Peace Corps? Did you expect to be there?

I am serving in Probištip, Macedonia for two years as a volunteer English teacher. During my last semester at UW-Eau Claire I started the application process, which took about two years from the day I started until my departure. What I did not expect was the life-changing culture that awaited me here in Macedonia.

How does your PR major relate to your daily tasks?

I manage the Instagram account for Peace Corps in Macedonia – one of the first programs to have one. My PR background helped me to be chosen out of many applicants. I also use my blogging skills via WordPress as well as public speaking, which I do a lot of as a teacher.

I use communication skills all the time. Living in a less opportune country where communicative abilities aren't taught as much made me appreciative of the skills I have.

What is the most rewarding part of your volunteering?

The most rewarding feeling is being accepted into the community. Through the Peace Corps I am not just visiting or briefly volunteering, I am living here. It is not easy, but the connections I have made make the experience worth it. I have overcome challenges, expanded my interests, and redefined my definition of success. For example, I didn't think I would teach a course on positive psychology, which was one of my proudest accomplishments here.

“Do not be afraid of things not working out. Just go for it. Public relations is versatile, so let it take you everywhere and anywhere.”

How do you balance the Peace Corps with your personal life?

For the Peace Corps I teach English classes until about 2:00p.m., then my day is filled with projects. I lead a group of girls in an organization called GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) where I teach them about the importance of maintaining a world

vision and connecting with people. I also keep in touch with other volunteers in the country. My personal life consists of communicating with family, socially connecting, and developing relationships in Macedonia. There is a slower pace of life here than the hustle and bustle of the U.S. It took some time getting used to, but I have a solid routine down now.

Do you have any advice for students currently in the PR program?

My advice would be to never let anyone else's opinions stop you from doing what you want to do – just go for it. Do not be afraid of things not working out because you can always make a change for the better. Public relations is versatile, so let it take you everywhere and anywhere.

Written By: Taylor Zellmer
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Keri Pietsch

Class of 2014



**Flight Attendant
American Airlines
Dallas, TX**



DALLAS – Keri never thought she would be a flight attendant. After all, she went to school for public relations and creative writing. With the experiences she gained while attending UW-Eau Claire, she was able to jump on an amazing opportunity she could not have imagined herself passing up. And with her PR major, she was set for just about anything and everything. Keri never thought she would be utilizing her skills 39,000 feet in the air, but that's where she found her life after graduation taking her.

How do you balance work and your personal life?

One of the awesome things about this job is that your work does not go home with you. When I leave the airline, I don't have to worry about anything, so it gives me uninterrupted time home. While this job gives me a flexible schedule, it is a challenge to find time to see friends who work 9-5 corporate jobs with weekends off. I rarely have weekends off, but I've found a way to make it work.

What is one area of your life you would like to improve?

While I love everything about my job as a flight attendant, I do wish I were still writing (I have a creative writing minor). I would like to dedicate some time to writing again, even if it's just a blog.

What did you do immediately after graduation?

Well, I graduated in May of 2014 and was hired by American Airlines in June of that summer. But I needed to wait six months before I could begin training. So, I lived at home with my parents in Farmington, MN and worked as a substitute teacher every day until I left for Texas in January of 2015 to begin my job.

How did UW-Eau Claire, or more specifically the communication and journalism department, prepare you for your career?

As a flight attendant, once the passengers are on the plane you are the only face of the company they see. This means that we must diffuse any situation that occurs on-board, and often find ourselves handling situations that occurred before the plane was even boarded. PR encompasses all of that. We must be the best face of the airline that we can be, because we're there when it really matters.

What are some of the most important pieces of advice you would give to someone wanting to get into your field?

Most importantly, I would tell them to weigh out all of their options, whether it is in regards to job location, hours, or opportunities. I would also recommend jumping on any opportunity to develop connections whenever you can. I discovered my job through my sister's friend's post on Facebook. Do not underestimate the ability to utilize social media to your advantage. Also, I would highly advise having an

internship before graduation. I would say I was a bit naïve while I was still in school because I didn't see the benefits that would come with an internship or a club like PRSSA. If I could do it over again, I would make sure I do both.

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

The best part of being a flight attendant is the spontaneity. I have friends all over the United States that I have met through work, and I never stop meeting new people. Every time I'm working, it's a new adventure. I get to go out, explore, and see places new all over the United States that I doubt a job with a regular, set schedule would allow me to do.

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Reading**

