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## From Those Who Know: Alumni Advice

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## From Those Who Know: Alumni Advice

### Abstract

They remind us that it is not the theories we learn or the graphs we draw that are most important. Rather, the general skills we develop during the four years of our college life help most.

## Getting a Competitive Edge Through Economics

Angela Smith

Students who choose to major or minor in economics do not always do so because they are interested in becoming economists. Unlike degrees in accounting or nursing, the practical applications of an economics degree are not often obvious. Some of us choose economics simply because we enjoy it, and do not realize until later all of the avenues open to graduates with an economics background.

Are some of you still wondering--*What can I do with a degree in economics?* Here is what Illinois Wesleyan alumni have to say about how their economics degrees have helped them in their respective careers and/or graduate programs. Whatever their current position may be, many alumni have found the skills acquired as an economics major here at Wesleyan to be extremely valuable in the job market.

**John Ashenfelter '84** comments that in his profession he “periodically will examine economic factors to present public policy arguments,” while for **Brenda Weil '92** economics “has allowed [her] to develop analytical skills that [she] can apply to her current occupation.” For **Richard Whitlock '84** an economics education has meant getting “a much better grasp of what is going on” when analyzing “current events and trends,” while **Franklin Nnebe '94** credits economics with having “helped [him] to understand the world around [him].”

IWU alumni are not only using their economic savvy in the work place. They are also finding that earning a degree in economics can be good preparation for many types of graduate programs. Our alumni are successfully working toward law degrees, MBA degrees; and yes, some are even on their

way to becoming economists with doctoral degrees.

*How can majoring in economics help you to become a lawyer?* **Barb Kube '94** describes study in economics as “a wonderful way to develop problem-solving skills,” skills that have helped her “to better organize materials, [and] . . . to develop a comprehensive and logical method of reasoning.” The IWU Economics Department provided **John Snyder '91** with the “good teachers and challenging courses” that taught him to “read and write and analyze problems,” all of which were essential skills that helped him to survive law school. For **Ann Chalstrom '94**, the “good analytical reasoning skills” emphasized over “rote memorization” in the economics program have helped her to do well in law school.

To those who have gone on to study economics at the graduate level, the skills acquired here at Wesleyan have been very valuable. **Risa Kumazawa '94** uses her research skills as a graduate research assistant and draws on her “knowledge of economic theory” in her current teaching position. Through the study of economics, **Paul Davies '92** is able to “research real world issues that have important policy applications.”

To give you a sense of the edge that an economics degree can give you over other college graduates, **Chris Basaillon '93** says it best: “I was head and shoulders above the crowd as far as understanding why things work the way they do in the economy.”

## From Those Who Know: Alumni Advice

Elsie Shen

With a Bachelor's degree in Economics, some people are looking for career opportunities, while others are more interested in graduate schools. Most of our alumni,

though having vastly different postgraduate experiences, offer similar advice to the Economics students of today. They remind us that it is not the theories we learn or the graphs we draw that are most important. Rather, the general skills we develop during the four years of our college life help most.

Oral and written communication skills have been regarded as the most important by many alumni; among them are **John Ashenfelter, Jim Fleming, Brenda Weil** and **David Mosey**. In Mosey's words, "learning to think and write clearly are skills required in all jobs." Blue book exams and oral presentations have helped us a great deal.

Computer literacy will also make us more marketable. In today's society, computer systems are ubiquitous. In order to perform jobs more effectively and efficiently, we should learn to speak the language of the century -- computer language. **Daniel Peter** states, "take additional computer classes to automate more of the decision-making process."

Diversity is also a key issue brought up by many alumni. As **Richard Whitlock** said, "get a diverse background; you never know what you will be faced with." In today's workforce, employers value generalists as much as they value experts. A diverse education can also give us more options for future career paths or career changes. It is generally accepted that people who are interested in graduate school should acquire more math skills.

While internships and work experience are useful, **Dan Scholz** also suggests co-operative work programs as a worthwhile experience. Whether you are going directly to the workforce or continuing your education with a graduate program, "do only what you love to do," said **Lawrence Herbolsheimer**, and "sell the skills you learned as an economics major at least as much as the actual material you learned," said **Scott Patton**. Economics majors of Wesleyan are not just a group of

people who draw graphs and shift curves; we are concrete human beings with various skills.

## **Investing in the Future: an interview with Yuet Wei Wan**

**Angela Smith and Elsie Shen**

Recent graduate **Yuet Wei Wan** completed her Illinois Wesleyan career in 1993 with a 4.0 GPA and bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Economics. She then went on to embark on an exciting new career in investment banking.

Since that time, **Yuet Wei** has been working as an investment banking analyst for **CS First Boston**--a company with over 5,000 employees and over 20 offices worldwide. Under the joint ownership of **Credit Suisse** and **Met Life**, **CS First Boston** is one of the top five firms in its industry and handles corporate debt, equity, mergers, and acquisitions for its many corporate clients.

Although **Yuet Wei's** current position is with the company's headquarters in New York, her job has taken her to more places around the world than most of us could imagine. In the six month period since last October, **Yuet Wei** has spent time working on projects in London, Argentina, Indonesia, and Ghana.

As a junior analyst on the company's "Global Power Project Finance Group," **Yuet Wei** works with senior analysts on the "financing of large infrastructure projects on a non-recourse basis." The group also helps its clients to maintain their credit ratings while dealing in the bonds and capital markets, and handles project mergers and acquisitions.

The projects that **Yuet Wei** has worked on are no small potatoes either. On the contrary, they are often large-scale projects involving billions of dollars in financing and that are certain to impact both local and international