



3-2013

## March 2013 Newsletter

Career Center, Illinois Wesleyan University

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# CAREER PROFILE

a look at life outside Illinois Wesleyan University

**Alyssa Speranza, '13**  
English/Business Administration

**Public Relations/Media Intern**  
COUNTRY Financial

## 1) How did you hear about this position and why were you interested in it?

I saw the position listed on the Career Center's Titan CareerLink. When I looked into what the job would entail, it seemed to be the perfect meshing of my two majors.

## 2) How rigorous was the interview process before you got the position? How were you able to overcome the nerves?

The interview process consisted of filling out an online application, an interview with a HR representative at the Career Center and an interview at COUNTRY. I was definitely nervous going into both of those interviews, especially the second one at COUNTRY. At that point they had my writing samples, and I knew there were going to be some tough questions about my writing and my resume. I had put a lot of time preparing and learning about the company and the role—that is probably the best way to overcome those nerves.

## 3) What do you typically do at your internship?

There is no "typical day" in the Public Affairs and Media Relations department, but for the most part I write and send out press releases, partake in media monitoring and write content for COUNTRY's intranet site. I have also been given the opportunity to work on special projects such as writing content for a brochure that will be handed out to clients, writing a news article for a monthly publication and interacting with local media to pitch stories.

## 4) What is the office atmosphere like?

COUNTRY is an insurance company, and can be formal at times. However, the PAMR department functions as a team. Everyone works together on

brainstorming, projects, editing and everything in-between. It requires people to be friendly and open to new ideas. It is a very collaborative environment.

## 5) What have been the most enjoyable and challenging parts so far?

I have most enjoyed being able to write as a part of my job. This, of course, has also been a challenge. Writing press releases is not the same as writing papers for class, and that has taken some adjusting.

## 6) Has your experience increased your interest in the work you are doing?

Absolutely. I had never thought about working in public relations or with the media before I took this position. Now, I see it as a career goal.

## 7) You had mentioned press releases are not the same as writing papers for class and it has taken some adjusting. How were you able to overcome the adjustment?

My supervisor was nice enough to help me through the first release that I wrote—she gave me tips about style and content. From there it was important that I took time to meticulously review my work before handing it in, and remembering edits that I received so I could continuously incorporate those into my work.

## 8) Where do you see yourself going after this internship, or more importantly, after college?

Ideally, I would love to work internally for a company's communications/public relations department.

## 9) When in your internship experience made you realize you'd love to work for a company's communications/public relations department?

I was working on a story about the

adoption benefit that COUNTRY offers to its employees. It was national adoption month, and our team was trying to get a story to the local media about our benefit and about the need for people to adopt. I had the opportunity to work with one of COUNTRY's employees who had adopted his daughter from Taiwan using the benefit. It was so clear how much he loved his daughter and how passionate he was about the topic. The story received coverage on the radio and TV with this employee's interview! Working on this project really opened my eyes to the possibilities of working in public relations, the possibility of doing good.



## 10) What's the most important thing you learned from this experience besides that public relations/media is something you'd like to do in your future?

Through this internship, I learned how to communicate with people from all backgrounds. I've worked with journalists from around the country, COUNTRY employees, vendors and COUNTRY executives. The ability to coordinate and communicate with all different people is something that will carry over to my career, no matter the field.

# CAREER CONNECTIONS

a newsletter from the hart career center

March 2013

## On The Front Line: IWU's PATH Crisis Hotline Interns

Do you have what it takes to help others in need? Ever thought of what it would be like to have a job where you have no idea what lies ahead and who might be contacting you next? Consider an internship with PATH (Providing Access to Help) Inc.

"Every hour of every day someone in Illinois needs help locating and connecting with essential community services," according to PATH's website. In 1971 PATH was just a drug hotline on Illinois State's campus. Since then, it has developed into a community resource people turn to when seeking help in human services. By providing a 24/7 crisis, information, and referral hotline, PATH accomplishes its mission of providing access to help to improve and save lives. And one thing is for sure; there isn't a typical day of work at PATH. "It's completely different every day. Yes, I talk to some of the same callers, but most likely I have to handle a situation I have never dealt with before. I never know what is on the other line of the phone I pick up," said Megan Dyer, '14 psychology. Dyer is one of three Illinois Wesleyan students interning at PATH this semester. These individuals work on the front line and deal with crises on a day-to-day basis.

PATH's main services range from "just general support to suicide

prevention on the spot. Callers are in a wide range of emotional states: whether they need help with a decision, relationships, or are suicidal," said Jennifer Nettleton '01, Program Manager, 211/Crisis Services. In 2010, 79,242 calls were handled by PATH through their hotline. In 2009 United Way 211 made its debut in Central Illinois to help residents find fast, free, and confidential help for health and human services through McLean, Livingston, and DeWitt counties. And by 2012, their services expanded to five more counties. As their services expand, the emphasis on strong training is crucial to staying true to their mission. "PATH does a great job at making sure the volunteers have gone through pretty intense training," said Emily Shearer, '14 psychology. This therefore allows them to assess the person, get a grasp for the situation, and have a plan of action to help that person out. Nettleton also said, "There is a big emphasis on setting our workers with a strong foundation to be as best as they can to provide help in every possible situation."

So are you a possible candidate to work for PATH? According to Nettleton, "we usually look for human services degrees which can fall under social work, sociology, psychology, or criminal justice. But you don't have to be one of these majors. PATH has taken on many different majors that had experience in social justice or just had good people skills." And for Ben Gesensway, '14 psychology, he started with PATH "as a simple way to advance [his] psychology [background]." Yet, he, Dyer, and Shearer later realized it was a lot more than just following something



in their major. For Gesensway, he knows he "would greatly enjoy going into clinical psychology as a therapist because [of his] love to help people." Dyer said, "Getting out of my comfort zone was a big motivator. I have never done anything like this and I'm glad I did. PATH is equally as eye opening, as it is gratifying." And for Shearer, she wants to go into the counseling field. Yes, this internship does parallel her major, but it also gives her some very strong experience in counseling.

Does this mean PATH is the only organization a psychology major can go to for internship experience and exposure? No, not at all! According to Professor Linda Kunce, Psychology Department Internship Coordinator, "there are many excellent internships open to psychology majors. Psychology majors intern in education settings (e.g., local schools, Headstart), mental health settings (e.g., addictions treatment programs, The Baby Fold), forensic settings (e.g., Prairie State Legal Services, Juvenile detention center, court mandated detention programs), health settings (e.g., community health care clinic), programs serving the homeless, programs serving children and adults with developmental disabilities, human resource settings and more." The Career Center can help students seeking internship opportunities find and sort through options. (Continued on page 2)

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Find out here!

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Edition



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Let's face it, we can't all be like Dr. Gregory House from, House, diagnosing patients and solving intense medical/psychological mysteries. Yet, we can follow something we truly love or believe in, which is what these three students do at PATH every day. Jennifer Nettleton, '01 sociology, just needed to get her foot in the door somewhere. Now, she's been at PATH for ten and a half years where she's transitioned from homeless to crisis services. Be a hero in your own way. Do what you love best. Why? Because you'll never truly be able to call it work. It's your life and your passion.

### Upcoming Career Center Events

**3/6 ~ Financial Aid Planning for Seniors @ 6:30 pm** in the Welcome Center Auditorium

**3/22-23 ~ Council for IWU Women Summit \*** Register on [titanpride.org](http://titanpride.org)

**3/26 ~ Crystal Ball Coffee House: Philosophy @ 7pm** in the Welcome Center Auditorium

**4/9 ~ Crystal Ball Coffee House: Social Justice @ 7pm** in the Welcome Center Auditorium

**Come visit The Career Center**  
**Schedule an appointment!**

**Phone: 309.556.3071**

**Drop- In Hours:**

**Wednesdays: 2-4 p.m.**  
**Friday: 1:30-3 p.m.**

## **Majors ≠ Careers. Why not?** **Find out here!**

Where are you right now? Do you know where you want to go? How are you going to get there? During my freshman year, I never envisioned myself working at the Career Center writing the monthly newsletter! But when you meet certain people through a class and learn about them, you never know what kind of connections you can build or where it might lead!

One hundred percent predictability is impossible because **any situation can change everything!** Career planning involves numerous unknown variables that impact the ability to plan out your future. Be open-minded, take on new adventures... this is exactly what Chaos Theory is about. On the other hand, there is the more straight line or linear way of seeing Career Development. It's almost like a four year timeline that gives distinct objectives for you to follow for each year in college. There is no sense of chaos with this theory. Structure, checklists, and a proper order all define this linear path style of Career Development. And as you can see, we have two co-existing ideologies here. Here's my mission (I'm here to save you from career worries!): I want to make sure I explain these ideologies and help you understand that **they both can exist together**. It really isn't one or the other.

Okay, you might think, who cares about this so-called Chaos Theory? Look at it this way; there are external factors which can affect anyone's career path. Things happen in life, and they're constantly taking place around us. What we do with that is up to us. The chance of meeting someone and that taking us in a different direction happens daily. Chaos can be unsettling, but it doesn't have to be. We can embrace it and therefore opportunities can come out of it. As technology is advancing, new jobs such as those with social media and genetic counseling are rising. These positions didn't exist ten to twenty years ago. And with more jobs evolving and growing, it makes it hard to say, "I am

going to do this the rest of my life." Career development is a messy and exploratory process. Sometimes your major won't have anything to do with your job.

Explore. Challenge. Experience. How can you go out there and challenge yourself? Go see a speaker or event and learn about a topic you think wouldn't interest you. Put yourself out there. It's easier said than done, and that's understandable. But after you do it a couple of times, you get more comfortable with it. There are always new and emerging occupations out there waiting to be explored. It's just a matter of who is willing to go find them and try something different rather than stay in their comfort zone. Hibernate or put yourself out there. The unknown will remain unknown until it surfaces.

The more traditional approach to Career Development involves a more linear way of looking at things. First, you come to the university's Career Center and meet with a professional staff member. You then may take a self-assessment to explore your interests and identify strengths and skills you like to use. Then, you develop your resume and seek on or off-campus practical experience opportunities or internships. Do you see how everything is in direct order? It's like a predetermined checklist of items that need to be taken on one after the other.

Here's what you should take away from all of this: there is no right or wrong way to go. It's like I said in the first paragraph, it isn't one or the other. We can use the linear path and Chaos Theory at the same time. This is part of the reality with today's world. On January 28th, Jon Schlesinger, Assistant Director of Career Services at the University of Colorado Boulder, spoke to students at IWU about Majors and Careers in a Changing World. To really stress his point about major and career correlation, he provided a list of celebrities like John Stewart, Colin Powell, Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, Carrie Underwood and Ken Jeong whose majors did not directly correlate

with their current careers! Here's an example that he explained through a life map, which takes a huge 360.

If you've ever seen the Hangover (1 or 2), Role Models, Transformers: Dark Side of the Moon, or the NBC show Community, then you definitely know Ken Jeong. He started out by graduating high school at age 16; he was pretty smart I'd say. His parents then encouraged him to pursue a medical degree. He went to Duke University for his undergrad and then continued with medical school. But, where does he develop into the TV and movie star? It all started in New Orleans during Jeong's residency as a doctor. He started going to comedy clubs and then began doing some of his own stand-up routines. During a bigger scale stand-up competition called The Big Laff Off, he was spotted by an NBC executive and encouraged to move to Los Angeles, California. He decided to move there with his family where he eventually built up his career, gaining more and more exposure. With more exposure and an established reputation, he then landed spots on television and in movies. A medical school student, then a doctor, followed by a comedian and an eventual movie/television celebrity; see the correlation? I sure don't. And that's the point! A college major cannot perfectly predict your future endeavors. One's major is only one small aspect of a future career. Other things have influence too such as the economy, family, skills, chance, values, interests, location, culture, and personality.

This can also be looked at from a student standpoint. Ever taken a class on a whim and then decide this might be a field of study you'd like to follow? That's exactly what happened to Erica Messerschmidt, '14 graphic design, when she decided her major. "After taking a drawing class with a friend for fun, it made me realize how much I missed art and that it was what I truly enjoyed. If I had never taken the drawing class, I never would have ended up where I am now."

Just take a look at this eye-opening statistic, "70 % of people say that a chance event significantly changed their career," Bright, Pryor, and Harpham

(2005), Journal of Vocational Behavior. Remember that careers and changes to those careers cannot always be planned out. You never know what you may be doing twenty years from now!

### Then

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**  
Morehouse College: Sociology



image: morehouse.edu

### CARRIE UNDERWOOD

Northeastern State University: Broad-coast Journalism



image: usatoday30.usatoday.com

### JON STEWART

College of William & Mary: Psychology

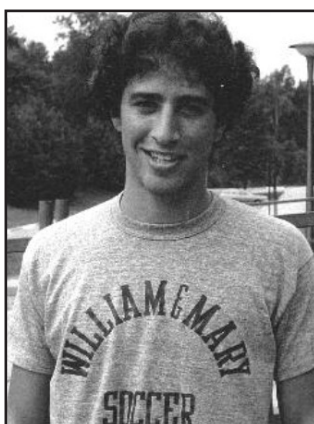


image: examiner.com

**"One's major is only a small aspect of a future career."**

### Now

Clergyman, Activist, and Leader in the Civil Rights Movement

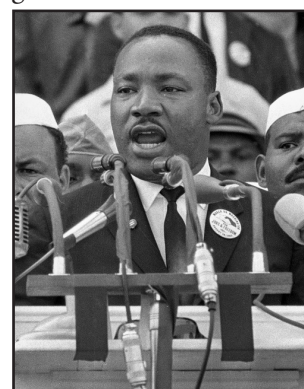


image: ametia.files.wordpress.com

2004 American Idol Winner, Country music artist; more than 15 million albums sold worldwide

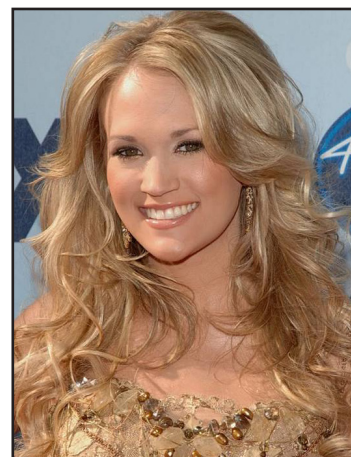


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The Daily Show Host, Political Satirist



image: vinnymurphy.blogspot.com