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Career Center, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Beyond the Bubble

a look at life outside Illinois Wesleyan University

What did you specifically do in Bangladesh?

I took four hours of Bengali classes every day in reading, grammar, speaking, and listening. I participated in cultural programs on weekends, and lived with 14 other American students who were also learning Bengali through the Department of State. We'd all received the same scholarship.

What made you want to apply for this scholarship?

I have plans to work with women who have been freed from the sex trade to open a school for the children who live in Sonagachi, the red light district of Kolkata, India. My goal is to provide a stable educational environment for kids who live in an inherently unstable community. I plan to focus the children's education on skills such as math and Bengali / English literacy, but also give them space to express themselves through artistic means such as creative writing, drama, and music. I need to know Bengali to accomplish this.

What were you evaluated on?

STUDENT PROFILE

Stephanie Nudelman '11

Majors: English - Writing and
Secondary Education
U.S. Department of
State Critical Language
Scholarship Recipient

We were chosen based on whether the State Department wanted to fund our future work for which we were planning on using the language.

Do they fund your program later?

No, but because I received a State Department scholarship, I have greater access to other State Department resources. So if I were to apply for the Fulbright scholarship, there's a higher chance that I could get it because of my language skills.

What was it like living in Bangladesh?

I was very grateful for the stability and safety the State Department provided for me during the program, but frustrated due to my past experience living in Kolkata. During my previous time in India, I had lived in cheap, dirty backpacker hostels, doing volunteer work with grassroots organizations. Thus, I was constantly engrained in the culture and what was going on, both amongst other foreign volunteers and the Indian women with whom I worked. In Bangladesh, however, because I went through a State Department scholarship, I lived in the wealthiest part of town – while what I want to do with my life is to live among poverty.

What kind of people do you think would be good for this scholarship?

You should apply for this if you have a very specific career plan ahead of you that necessitates learning a critical language, one for which you can't really find language training in the states.



Stephanie Nudelman (right) and two other State Department students outside of Bangladesh

How did living in Bangladesh help you learn the language?

I was literally surrounded by Bengali. My roommates were learning Bengali, my professors spoke Bengali, and everyone outside our apartment lived their daily lives in Bengali. Yes, a lot of people in Dhaka, the capital city, speak English, but in order to function in the society, I had to immerse myself in Bengali.

What did the scholarship cover?

The scholarship covered transportation to and from Bangladesh, food, living costs, and a weekly stipend to be used at our own discretion. At the end of the program, I had so much money leftover that I bought a plane ticket to and from India because the stipend was so exorbitant.

How fluent are you now?

I have the equivalent of two years of formal Bengali study in a university.

What languages does it offer?

Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla/Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, Urdu

Career Connections

a newsletter from the hart career center

February 2011

Networking When You're Not Too Great At Networking

Last summer, I was simultaneously met with the best and worst news I had ever heard. As I was searching the Internet for some sweet summer concerts to attend so that I could look really cultured and interesting, I found out that one of my favorite singers, Sting was coming to Ravinia Festival. But as soon as I had risen out of my chair and skipped around in a fit of joy, my soul was crushed as I found out that Sting had sold out in a matter of hours. Perhaps this was a sign that I should start listening to music that was made after 1985 and not constantly played in grocery stores, but I ignored it. I knew I had to see this magnificent man in concert. But how? Then I remembered... my friend, Emma was working at Ravinia at that very moment! Indeed, my quick thinking and a Facebook IM to Emma landed me with two lawn tickets to see Sting that July. Standing by the railing the entire night so my friend, Luke and I could see the stage and having to wait for hours to get out of Highland Park was so worth it. What do we call my use of very valuable connections, everyone? Networking.

For those of you who are without random connections to important people (which is just about everyone), networking can be a huge challenge. Especially if approaching new people is as difficult for you as it is for me, the

anxiety of saying the wrong thing or not knowing what to ask becomes very stressful. However, if you break down the important parts of networking, the problem becomes less overwhelming.

"When you consider how many resumes are submitted to websites like Monster, networking becomes very important," said Career Center director, Warren Kistner. "Even in a good job market, it would be as true in the tight job market we're in that an employer doesn't have time to look through thousands of resumes when there are other ways to find talent."

Those ways are usually through other people that an employer trusts to provide them with connections to qualified students on the job hunt. When friendships with these people are built, you are more likely to be one of those qualified applicants.

"Everyone likes to feel they're making an informed decision," Kistner said. "If someone you meet through networking can provide you with a warm introduction to the person responsible for hiring in a company, it's more likely that your application materials will be looked at."

Nowadays, the venues for networking are constantly expanding. Alumni networks, such as Titan CareerLink and IWU's alumni database, professional associations, and campus organizations all serve as excellent modes of meeting employees within your future job field. At the same time, social media outlets like LinkedIn are becoming increasingly popular channels.

For students, LinkedIn profiles are all about displaying what you know and what your skills are. When making a profile, be sure to highlight your education, campus activities, specialties such



as foreign languages and computer skills, and personal work like writing or design. The more complete your profile is, the more likely it is to get noticed – kind of like one of those dating websites whose commercials constantly interrupt The Colbert Report for me.

After your profile is in order, it is time to get out there and network! When you connect with someone, be sure to leave a note with your request that, if necessary, reminds him or her where you met. If a mutual friend is connecting you two, give them a quick introduction of who you are and why you want to connect with them.

Another way to network is to join LinkedIn groups. For example, I am a part of the Relay For Life group, a group for my denomination of Christianity, Assemblies of God, and even a jazz saxophonists group. It is also a good idea to start with your university group and then find other organizations you already belong to. This way, it is easier to find people with whom you share common interests.

Be sure to also check out LinkedIn's Answers feature. It allows you to seek advice from a wide variety of people around the world and to also input your own knowledge to other questions. The more active you are with this, the more likely people are to

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view your profile. (Read more about LinkedIn on page 4.)

But for those who are still uncertain about networking in person, Kistner provided a couple of excellent keys to networking.

- Know how to handle yourself in a professional setting – “It is important to know your audience and their expectations with things such as dress and manners.”

- Follow through with any agreed upon contact – “If you tell someone you’ll follow up with them through

email, make sure you do that.”

- Work to establish a relationship before making the ask about a job – “Individuals should be impressed enough with your qualifications that they want to help you out.”

- Do advance research and planning so you know what is easily attainable about that organization – “Don’t ask questions that you could easily look up on the Internet, but do ask questions as a follow-up from your research.”

- Never leave a networking contact without asking them for additional

contacts in the field – “An important part of networking is expanding your network as you engage in contacts.”

- Remember to give and receive in these friendships – “Make sure that the other person knows you are willing to provide assistance when you can.”

Don’t forget that networking takes a lot of practice. The only way you can get better at it is to keep working at it. So put yourself out there, whether it be online or in “the real world,” and you will be one step closer to getting the job you have always wanted.

Creativity and Analytical Thinking Combine in Advertising

Advertising is one of those things that is inescapable. Any product you have you need to advertise. Any place you go you’ll see some sort of ad. If you suffer easily from sensory overload, perhaps this is a difficult reality for you. But this is good news for anyone who possesses one of the many skills that advertising calls for. Those skills are growing more numerous every day.

Patrick Palmer ’86 is EVP global strategy director at Leo Burnett, a company that has brought you characters such as Tony the Tiger, the Jolly Green Giant, and the Pillsbury Doughboy. Today, Leo Burnett provides advertising strategies for a wide variety of companies including Coca-Cola, Nintendo, and Disney. Palmer’s job involves a more research-oriented side of advertising.

“I am an account planner, meaning I figure out why people buy products and why they don’t, and try to reveal the underlying motivations for consumer behavior,” he said. “I then translate these insights into creative strategies that form the basis for advertising. I do a lot of first-hand research with consumers – focus groups, depth interviews, and surveys – plus looking at trends in culture and society.”

Recent graduate, Mark Steiner ’10 has a different advertising focus than Palmer. He currently is an athletic marketing graduate assistant for Redbird Sports at Illinois State University. Though he is officially involved in marketing, his responsibilities involve advertising every day.

“With the advertising, nearly all of it is created using Photoshop

and Illustrator,” Steiner said. “Some advertising I do is newspaper ads, billboards, the marquee on Main Street, posters and table tents that go around in the community, and of course, social media.”

Because advertising is such a necessary industry, it is constantly developing and adapting to the changing times around it.

“The digital revolution has created an entirely new landscape for communication and a new basis for brands to connect with consumers,” Palmer said. “People consume media differently. Many of the old models for how advertising works simply don’t apply, and as an industry, we are constant adaptation mode.”

For Steiner, this digital revolution has led to a brand new advertising venue for his job: social media. “If you were to look at my position two or three years ago, they would not be worrying about this at all,” he said. “Print items would be enough advertisement. Facebook and Twitter are a crucial way to reach the target market. With social media, you can direct the advertisement directly to the people that matter instead of a poster at a local pub that 1 in every 50 people might notice and care about.”

Perhaps due to its expansion in technology, advertising as a whole is an industry that is doing very well despite the recovering economy, especially for those with talent in graphic design. But for some specific types of advertising, open positions are few and far between.

“In the sports industry, advertising positions are extremely scarce,” Steiner said. “To work with a professional sports team, advertising openings

are rarer than the Cubs in the World Series. If you want a job in sports and advertising, your best bet is to look into smaller companies or third party companies that do outsource advertising for teams.”

As advertising adapts and changes, it opens up more doors for students to use an assortment of talents. Advertising seems to be an industry where if there is something you are good at, there is probably a place for you.

“I sometimes say that a good agency is like the island of misfit toys - everyone with a unique skill or personality quirk that allows them to see things differently,” Palmer said. “It’s hard to define, but the most sought-after talent is creative synthesis - the ability to take lots of different inputs and ideas and put them together in new and interesting ways. To succeed in advertising, you have to be incredibly curious about the world, how people think, what’s going on in culture, technology, media, and so on. A well-furnished mind is essential in order to make connections and have new ideas. That’s one reason I think liberal arts preparation is so good for advertising. Most of the people I admire in this business studied liberal arts as undergraduates, because it promotes critical thinking and love of learning.”

If you’re looking to go into advertising, however, there are a few specific skills that seem to be desired across the board: graphic design, creativity, writing, and communications.

“Don’t go into marketing or advertising if you have no people



Photo courtesy of www.traveladventures.org

skills,” Steiner said. “You want people to want your product, and if you are trying to tell them your product is superior, they aren’t going to believe you if you can’t effectively communicate with them. Along with communicating with your consumers, you typically won’t work

alone in advertising so use the people around you. I have done advertising in both a family atmosphere and a rigid atmosphere. Let me tell you; family atmosphere where people are comfortable and can bounce ideas off each other is better for everyone.”

“For people who want to become copywriters or art directors, an advanced degree from one of the advertising schools or creative centers is almost essential,” Palmer said.

“It’s the only way to develop a polished portfolio of work to share in interviews. That can be expensive but is the most common path. Account planners and account managers may go to ad schools but can also break in through internships or connections.

Digital people and producers will also need some technical training in order to get a job.”

With all of the new developments and opportunities available, one thing about advertising is very clear. It is an ever-expanding and exciting field to be involved in. But landing a fantastic advertising job does not come without much needed experience and preparation.

“Though it’s beaten to death, take that internship or the next volunteer opportunity,” Steiner said. “The best way to learn business... is on your feet. I have had many interns work with my co-workers and me who by the end of the semester have learned how to make business decisions and techniques to advertising and spreading the word that are never mentioned in class.”

A Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Started With LinkedIn

I like to believe that I am a connoisseur of professional social networking sites. There are few things I enjoy more than looking over my profile and going, “Wow. I am very impressive.” Okay, not really. My slowly developing LinkedIn page is about all I have to offer Internet-savvy employers. However, I like to pretend that I know enough to guide you through how I started up my LinkedIn profile.

The reason I began my page seems pretty obvious now. Since job and internship hunting is expanding to the Internet more every day, it is important to make sure you do not go unnoticed. The fact that employers are using this venue is no surprise. I mean, you can order pizza online now, which is great for people who are scared of phones like me. (Sidenote: Have you ever been to Domino’s website? I think cheering on some guy named Brad who apparently is making my pizza is just as exhilarating as enjoying it.) So now that you know why you should make a profile, let’s get to it.

Step One: Get a decent profile picture.

On Facebook for a while, I had this awesome picture of me with a Batman hood over my face that I threw on at Hot Topic. My mother was very proud to be seen with me. While this got me at least six “likes” on Facebook, it is clearly not a LinkedIn appropriate picture. Find a good headshot of you, whether

it be a professional photograph or not, that represents you the way you want employers to view you.

Step Two: Show ‘em what you’ve got!

There is no such thing as too much bragging when it comes to LinkedIn. Well, okay. Maybe employers don’t want to know about the checkers tournament I won at church camp in 6th grade. (I dominated, by the way.) But when it comes to your academic work, your employment history, and your creative work, if that applies to your field, there is no way you can say too much. Fill in relevant coursework or tell them exactly what you did at your last internship. Don’t expect employers to be able to read your mind.

Step Three: Yes, you do have specialties.

The specialties section seemed a little too professional for me when I first saw it. The only thing I had considered a specialty of mine until then was laughing at things that aren’t funny in movies or getting the highest score on “More Than A Feeling” in Guitar Hero. As impressive as those are, they obviously aren’t what an employer is looking for. When I really thought about it, though, I realized I had a lot of background in research with my political science courses, a good understanding of finances with my business courses, and developed communications skills with my job and radio. Don’t sell yourself short. You

definitely have a lot to offer an employer.

Step Four: Make your profile you.

Although LinkedIn is a professional social networking site, it offers a lot of applications you can add to your page to personalize it more. Currently, I have my Amazon booklist up which lists what I’m reading now and books that I recommend people to pick up. Now employers can get a better idea of my other interests and see that I read on my own time, too. I also have connected my WordPress blog to my LinkedIn to give employers a better idea of my perspectives on life, what I’m currently doing, as well as my more casual writing style. A lot of people also connect their Twitter to their LinkedIn, which shows employers that you’re out there and doing things. There are plenty of other applications you can tag on if you do some searching.

Step Five: Make some connections.

After I added all of my friends on LinkedIn, I noticed that a few of my professors had their own profiles. Connecting with your professors, bosses, or leaders of any organization you are a part of is an excellent way to get recommendations filled out on your LinkedIn. Ask them if they wouldn’t mind writing one for you.

Now get out there! Follow company pages! Join groups! LinkedIn is a fantastic resource you do not want to waste.