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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's your career journey been like since IWU?

I had an offer to work with Deloitte full-time at graduation, but I wanted to do something different. So, I applied to drive the Wienermobile.

For a year, from 2002 to 2003, I worked for Oscar Meyer, did all their PR and marketing and drove the East Coast. It was amazing. Just the best year ever. At one point, I went to an IWU reunion in D.C. and that same night got pulled over (in the wienermobile) by the Pentagon for driving on a restricted road. The story found its way into all the major papers across the country.

After that I went to Deloitte for a couple years. Unfortunately, when you're working 80 hours a week, it can be brutal. I did accounting for a little over two years and didn't really love it. There's no work-life balance whatsoever.

Next, I moved into a recruiting role for about three years, up until this past summer. Then things in the economy tanked and I lost my job last July. I was unemployed and looking for work for about five months. In the meantime I moved to D.C., and took a job in sales with a non-profit for five months.

Then in May of this year, I started a new job in international development. Basically, it's working in third world countries to help build up the infrastructure. So now I'm back in the accounting realm, but doing creative development work on projects we have abroad.

Can you describe your current employer?

Chemonics International is headquartered in D.C. It's an international development consulting organization.

We work directly with the United States Agency for International Development.

You recently worked in Afghanistan?

Yep, Afghanistan, Pakistan... they recently gave me West Bank, so any war torn country I cover. Starting three months ago, I've been on training trips where I tag along with a colleague to get an understanding of how the process works. I just got back from a three week trip to Kabul.

Enjoying it?

It's great. Now it's accounting with an HR spin. It's kind of everything from step one when you buy an office: You buy the computer, the software, you train the accountant, you re-train the accountant, then after a year goes by you go and do an audit to make sure everything's in compliance with your company standards as well as the U.S. government standards, and then at the end you close down the project. And most of the projects are two years long.

What are the challenges?

Well, being in charge of all those steps is one challenge. Bigger, is cultural. A

Alumni Profile: William Keller Accounting, Class of 2002 Chemonics International



lot of times, business in the U.S. is very cutthroat and straightforward; you send an email, it's bullet points and those are your questions, then it's done, over. In certain places I work now, they want it to be more fluffy. Instead of pointed questions, you need to somehow beat around the bush to get to the point. So it's a big challenge just to learn how people work elsewhere in the world. Also, the skill level in these war torn countries can be an issue. It'd be great to have a CPA who's got 10 years experience, but sometimes five years of using their checkbook is pretty damn good. What do you do? It's really been a unique experience. [Continued Pg. 2]

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Career Connections

a newsletter from the hart career center

October 2009

Great Environment for a Career



Luke Durbin ('05) worked as a biologist in Alaska to help sustain their fisheries.

When Chicken Little tells you nowadays that the sky is falling (and if you're not chilling with Chicken Little, you're simply not living. Guy knows how to party), it's hard not to peek. What with the threat of global warming and the collapse of the economy, sometimes it seems like that blazing blue skyline might come crashing to the ground.

Of course, this fear should note that the US government is working harder than ever to merge the threats of unemployment and climate change into assets. With bills like the American Clean Energy and Security Act, and approximately \$40 billion dollars worth of the stimulus package allocated to the US Department of Energy, the Obama Administration is making a clear push for energy efficient fields.

The question remains, though, can an emerging green sector honestly fight global warming, create jobs, *and* remain profitable all at the same time? Conventional wisdom suggests a scenario where businesses must pit their profit interests against the environment in a duel to the death.

As the founder of environmental consulting firm Ecosystem Capital, LLC, IWU alum Jay Truty ('96) might have a better grasp on the potential of environmentally friendly fields than most. Said Truty, "Business and environment can not only coexist, but if you manage both well you have a strategic advantage." This premise forms the foundation of Ecosystem Capital's aim to make it profitable for companies to integrate environmental considerations into their corporate decision-making process. In other words, Truty is "redefining the relationship between business and nature."

Truty said his motivation for starting Ecosystem Capital stems from his time

at IWU. "I realized in a business ethics class at IWU that you can't instill conservation ethics in everyone. You just can't. The only way to keep environmental value in tact is to give it a dollar value." Although Truty admits it sounds "unromantic to put a dollar value on nature," he argues that the more valuable you can make a habitat, such as a wetland or forest, the better chance you have of viewing the habitat as an asset.

"It can create a new economy of nature," said Truty. Of course, this creation takes "a mindset change to viewing trees as an asset" and Truty realizes he's at the forefront of shaping his industry. "We're not there yet," Truty said of the paradigm shift, "but that's where I hope to go."

One major advantage Truty has is a particular client: Ted Turner. The largest private landowner in America and a big environmentalist, the high-profile Turner has helped Truty "legitimize the business and use the resources [Turner] has to get things off the ground."

It would seem that the rest of the world is beginning to follow suit, too. According to the *Climate Change Business Journal*, environmental consulting will double its earnings over the next five years.

Naturally, though, there are plenty of other fields in which IWU alums are connected with their interests in environmental issues. Luke Durbin ('05), a biology and environmental studies major during his time at IWU, now works for SRA International, Inc. as an environmental emergency management analyst.

In this position, Durbin works with the EPA to develop and implement regulatory policies that prevent releases of oil and hazardous substances into the environment. In addition, Durbin helps coordinate responses to environmental emergencies, [Continued on Pg. 2]

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Essential Interviewing Tips!

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What are some of the security challenges doing business in Afghanistan?

The challenge, especially for the week I was there, was that the elections were going on. In terms of security, we hire a private firm that will pick us up at the airport in an armored vehicle and take us to the compound directly. It's not a place where we're just openly walking the streets buying trinkets. Everything's done behind closed doors.

Then, there are risks where our security will say, "there are elections today, you have to be home at noon." And you might not know that the day before, so you could have meetings planned. So flexibility is a key element.

Is this an example of outsourcing white collar/accounting jobs?

Ideally, that's kind of the goal. A lot of the top management of some of these organizations is going to be an ex-Pat, but we want to hire as many locals as

we can because our point of being over there is development. We want to make sure that we're feeding the economy. And when dealing with the economy it's always better to have locals on your side. Quite honestly, there are a lot of qualified people in these countries that are looking for work and if we can give them great work, then they can help friends and family continue their education and it expands upon itself.

Would you say what your firm is doing is generally accepted?

I would, because we've been there for a while and we've made a footprint. We try to build camaraderie with the locals, but it's a lot like someone coming into your house that you don't know. At first you're going to push back a little bit, but after you get to know them and work with them for a while they realize you're there to help them. And maybe you don't even know the best way to do

it, but you want to work with them one on one and figure it out. And once a number of them accept you it becomes broader and then the community brings you in.

Advice to IWU students?

Take advantage of travel abroad opportunities.

Keep in mind, too, that one of the guys in our class went right into accounting with Caterpillar and he's been there ever since. Then I've taken a totally different route in terms of trying to use skills to get to different places. So people progress differently and while we both have the same backgrounds, and we're both doing accounting work, we're in totally different fields. Especially with what's going on in the economy now, and how people are going to have to look for jobs, it might not be exactly what you want, but there are skills you can rely upon for the future.

Great Environment Cont.

such as chemical releases, oil spills and natural disasters.

According to Durbin, the core skills he developed at IWU remain key. "A certain amount of knowledge is essential, but the critical thinking, writing and research skills that you learn at IWU are indispensable and can be applied to any field," said Durbin.

Erinn Howard ('03), echoed some of the same sentiments, stating "IWU helped me learn to think; to think critically, creatively, and quickly." This ability has undoubtedly been imperative for Howard, who obtained her PhD in microbiology this past December. Howard only recently began a position as a post-doctoral research fellow with the Naval Research Laboratory, where she'll be researching alternative sources of energy for the Navy.

Explained Howard, "I will specifically be working with a bacterium (*Shewanella* spp.) that basically produces an electrical current. I'll be doing research with this bacterium to understand the genetic underpinnings of its ability to produce current. I'll also be working with engineers and chemists on the

project to work on using this bacterium in a microbial fuel cell (which is basically a battery that uses the bacterium to run)."

If combining your career with a passion for the environment sounds appealing, the Environmental Studies major and IWU's Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) could be good fits. Kelly Petersen, an IWU senior and environmental studies major, has engaged in many environmentally friendly internships during her time at IWU, including continued volunteer work restoring prairie at Funk's Grove and research through the National Science Foundation concerning pollination biology. Clearly, internships for IWU students interested in environmental issues are out there.

Another option is joining SSC. Said Petersen, "SSC works to make IWU a more environmentally friendly place and to raise awareness about environmental issues on a local, national, and global scale." Meetings are Wednesdays at 8 p.m. in the Underground.

At the very least, don't ignore careers in environmental fields. They could be the wave of the future.

Career Center Events

Date: 10/09

Event: **Student/Alumni Law Mentoring Panel**

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Welcome Center Auditorium

Date: 10/20

Event: **ISCPA Fall Interview Day**

Time: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Ashton Place, Willowbrook, IL

Date: 10/21

Event: **Internship Fair Orientation Workshop**

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Location: Welcome Center Auditorium

Date: 10/27

Event: **IWU Internship Fair**

Time: 4:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Location: Young Main Lounge, Memorial Center

Some Attending Employers:

Country Financial, State Farm,

You Name it Sports, Radio

Bloomington, and Enterprise

Rent-A-Car.

Removing Doubt in an Interview

With over 25 years of interview experience and his own book on the subject, there are few guides to interviewing better than Eric Hoss. The Bloomington resident, who's currently in management with State Farm Insurance, said he's seen fundamental interviewing errors from smart students over the years and thinks those mistakes can be corrected.

"Your goal in an interview is to leave the least doubt on the table," said Hoss. He further explained that in any situation an employer is going to have doubts about what's on your resume, or sometimes more importantly, what's not on your resume. Said Hoss, "You need to kill doubts, even if they don't bring it up."

Just how does one kill doubt? Hoss champions preparation in order to overcome nerves. For example, the Hart Career Center's Mock Interview Program lets you interview with real HR representatives from a variety of professional organizations. This practice interview can help you refine everything from your body language to your answers to such questions as the infamous "tell me

about yourself."

Likewise, the mock interview can help you prepare a few of the techniques Hoss recommends. In particular, Hoss suggests bringing a one page note-page to use during the interview. This page, which Hoss divides into five boxes, should contain the following information:

- **A list of your competencies:**

These are the things you've done and examples.

- **Special information about yourself:**

This includes languages, computer skills, etc.

- **Questions you want to ask:**

This proves you've done research on the company. "Do not underestimate how valuable it is to research the company," said Hoss.

- **A blank space to write questions from the context of the interview:**

This allows for the terrific line, "earlier in the interview you men-

-tioned..."

- **A space to jot down the names of the interviewers:**

This is important both to use during the interview and to later write that essential thank you note.

In short, this page of key notes allows you the opportunity to stay on track and help your interview be as effective as you'd like it to. If carrying a page of notes almost seems like cheating to you, Hoss maintained "it's an informational meeting, you can have things written down." Realistically, it will greatly enhance your chances.

If you'd like more information on the interviewing process or mock interviews available with the Hart Career Center call campus extension 3071. Or, take a look at Hoss' book, *Removing Doubt in an Interview: A Better Approach to the Job You Want*, available in the Career Center library. Above Hoss said to "understand the scope of the job you're applying for" when you walk into the interview. So be prepared!

Welcome to the Gap Year Choice

There is a place, dear reader, that is, yet is not. It is a cold and mysterious place, where lost souls float aloft in a dense shroud of ambiguity and uncertainty. This place, dear reader, is limbo. A paralyzing purgatory where many of you may be headed after graduation: the gap between school and post-graduate options.

Of course, this limbo does not need to be a period of inactivity for you. In fact, through several available gap year programs, this time can be filled with great experiences that can greatly enhance your career goals. Great, right?!

For Danny Burke '09, the Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship has provided precisely this sort of career-oriented experience to fill the gap after IWU. Said Burke, "At IWU, I became very interested in the concept of food justice (the right to healthy food for all) through my environmental studies curriculum. I recognized that food can be

used as a vehicle for social change. The Emerson National Hunger Fellowship, whose mission is to fight hunger by developing leaders, seemed like a logical first step for a career dedicated to food justice."

Through the fellowship, which began in August, Burke is working with Community Farm Alliance in Louisville. In February, he'll move to Washington D.C. for six months of policy-level work with organizations like the United States Department of Agriculture.

According to Burke, the fellowship is offering every avenue of career advancement that he'd hoped. "The fellowship has been amazing in that it's connected me with very important players in the food justice revolution," said Burke.

After his six months in D.C., Burke is looking to obtain a graduate-level degree in public policy with a concentration in social policy. Thanks to the fellowship, though, this is hardly his only option.

Said Burke, "Most previous Hunger Fellows are offered full time jobs with the policy organizations that they work with during their time as a fellow in D.C. So whether I decide to work or go back to school, the fellowship provides me with excellent opportunities for the future."

If a similar gap-year experience sounds like something you might be interested in, be sure to stop by the Hart Career Center for guidance. Traditional gap-year programs include the JET program, Teach For America, the Peace Corps, City Year, and the Koch Associate Program. For updated, current information on all of these programs and more, sign up to receive the Career Center listserv. Just send an email to careers-subscribe@lists.iwu.edu with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. In addition, the listserv will keep you up to date on all essential career center activities.