



Summer 7-10-2014

## Networking With IWU Alumni Boosts Job Opportunities for Grads

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### **Recommended Citation**

Kamp, Danielle, "Networking With IWU Alumni Boosts Job Opportunities for Grads" (2014).  
*News and Events*. 2422.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/2422>

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## Networking With IWU Alumni Boosts Job Opportunities for Grads

July 10, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Navigating a competitive job market is a challenge nearly every recent college graduate has faced. Thanks to networking and connections with other alumni, several Illinois Wesleyan University graduates have found positions through connections at The Horton Group in the Chicago area.

The Horton Group, one of the largest, privately owned insurance brokers in the Midwest, recently hired five Illinois Wesleyan graduates and one current student for permanent positions and internships at the company. “It was a natural choice to reach out to Illinois Wesleyan when The Horton Group decided to have a summer internship program and had several open positions to fill in which we knew we needed to find great talent,” said Katie (Simpkins) Cummins ’05, director of human resources. Cummins helped develop an internship program at the company, and has recruited and hired several Illinois Wesleyan students and alumni.



With connections to fellow alumni, Illinois Wesleyan graduates found jobs at The Horton Group.

After she was referred to Cummins through the Illinois Wesleyan University **Hart Career Center**, Hispanic Studies major Natalie Enda ’14 initially asked Cummins for advice about a career in human resources. Impressed with her initiative and interest in the company, Cummins hired Enda as an HR intern at The Horton Group.

“I think the best way students can show initiative is by following up with potential employers,” said Enda. “It can be a little nerve-racking, but you have nothing to lose and often they can help you tremendously either within their company or by referring you to someone they think may be able to help you.”

Nick Scheiper ’14, a mathematics major, met and interviewed with Cummins at the beginning of his senior year. Although there were no positions available at that time, Scheiper continued to pursue the company by attending a career fair at Illinois State University where he spoke with Cummins again about potential job openings. Soon after graduating, Scheiper began his position as a benefits marketing representative at The Horton Group. “Going to the career fair was what really set everything in motion for me, and it only took a five-minute conversation with Katie to get my name on the list,” said Scheiper. “Being able to show your interest and passion to employers is extremely important because first impressions go a long way.”

The Horton Group anticipates at least 20 job openings through 2014, ranging from opportunities for new college graduates to senior-level positions. “The Horton Group is always looking for great talent and Illinois Wesleyan grads definitely stand out compared with other students,” said Cummins. “They become involved in campus activities, seek out leadership opportunities, attend job fairs and career events and demonstrate great follow up after interviews. They are smart, poised and driven.”

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