

# WHAT'S YOUR U STORY?

A publication of the Writing for Public Relations  
course at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



# An End [AND] a New Beginning

## Farewell, UW-Eau Claire

Fifteen years sure have flown by. I still remember the first time I saw the UW-Eau Claire campus, in 1992. I was working as a journalist and was immediately impressed with the campus' natural beauty, its dedicated faculty and the research they were performing. Eight years later, after finishing a doctorate at the University of Maryland, I left The Washington Post and joined the UW-Eau Claire faculty, because I thought I could do more good helping to train the next generation of journalists. Now, my time at UW-Eau Claire is ending. Due to state budget cuts, I have taken a buyout, effective when I finish teaching Mass Media Ethics online this Winterim.

Some of my most memorable moments have been becoming the first CJ faculty member to win a Fulbright Fellowship and helping students earn prestigious scholarships. From Dow Jones editing internships to the Ann Devroy Memorial Fellowship, our students have earned bylines in The Washington Post, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Minneapolis StarTribune. I also have been able to bring students to do multimedia journalism in England, Peru and France – something I will continue to do as the director of ieiMedia's program in Nice, France, and as admissions director for all eight of its study abroad programs. I also will continue freelance writing, researching, nonprofit work, playing handball, biking and sailing.

Though I no longer will be teaching here, I am confident the faculty in the CJ department will continue to offer students a theoretically driven education, with a focus on real-world application. It's the faculty's dedication and sacrifices that give CJ students such a great chance for success after graduation.

I invite you to read about our CJ alumni in this edition of "What's Your CJ Story?" Their stories showcase the myriad possibilities that a communication and journalism major can have after leaving UW-Eau Claire. And, if their journeys are any indication, I'm sure I have some great adventures ahead, too.

Au revoir,



Mike Dorsher, Ph.D.  
Professor



***Do YOU  
have a CJ Story?***

Want to be featured in the  
next issue?

Contact Dr. Evan Perrault  
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The Power of  
Communication **AND** Journalism

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# Jason Mathwig

## Class of 2008



**Student Outreach  
Specialist**  
UW-Green Bay  
Green Bay, WI



GREEN BAY - There is a popular saying, “Once a Blugold, always a Blugold.” This is true for UW-Eau Claire alumnus Jason Mathwig. Mathwig, a native from Fall Creek, earned his bachelor’s degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 2008. After graduation he worked for UW-Eau Claire’s admissions office as an admissions counselor for six years. Mathwig is currently working for UW-Green Bay as a student outreach specialist.

### **What is your favorite memory about UW-Eau Claire?**

I am pretty partial to UW-Eau Claire because I grew up in the Eau Claire area. I lived on-campus even though I could have easily lived at home, and I truly enjoyed it. There is something special about Eau Claire. It’s the willingness of the staff going above and beyond to help students, as well as the various opportunities available for students, such as the study abroad programs and internships.

### **What are some skills that you gained from the CJ department that made you stand out?**

One is being able to see the big picture. The public relations program at UW-Eau Claire helped me really think about the different aspects of what you are going into and learning to focus in a specific area. Critical thinking and problem solving skills that I learned from classes have been very helpful as well. At my job we are trying to recruit more students to the nursing program by finding ways to make the program more attractive to prospective students, so the skills I learned at UW-Eau Claire have been useful.

Written By: Magdalene Abang  
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### **What aspects of your Blugold experience best prepared you for the real world?**

The public relations writing class really helped hone my skills as a writer. Business presentation classes also helped me feel more comfortable with myself, which is important since public speaking is something I have to do a lot in my career.

### **What do you know now, that you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

When I was in college I never went the extra mile to join students organizations or get super involved. My advice to my young self would be to get out of your comfort zone and try things that maybe you wouldn’t have thought of doing.

***“There is something unique about Eau Claire and UW-Eau Claire. It’s the willingness of the staff going above and beyond to help students.”***

### **What has been the most exciting or interesting part of your job?**

It’s the people, the connections you make, the brainstorming, and the collaborations. I love working in higher education. There is a lot of collaboration not just internally within the office but also externally with other higher education

institutions. The feeling of working with other people for a common goal is really what I truly enjoy about the position.

### **What advice would you give to students going into the public relations field, and what advice would you give to recent graduates going into the real world?**

Have a “yes” mentality whether it is helping out a friend, getting an internship, or volunteering. Get as much experience as you can because it will help you figure out what you like and what do you don’t like. I worked at UW-Eau Claire prior to working at UW-Green Bay. Getting the experiences working within the UW System and the connections I have made have been exceptionally helpful in my career. Employers are always looking for students with more experience, even for entry-level positions, and having a lot of experiences in various fields will help you a lot in the future.

# Christina Taddy

## Class of 2009



**Development & Operations Manager  
Milwaukee Riverkeeper  
Milwaukee, WI**



**MILWAUKEE** – From small city Eau Claire, to nonprofit aficionado, Christina Taddy has the skills, drive, and the education to do big things in the world of nonprofits. Since graduating from UW-Eau Claire with degrees in public relations and Spanish for business, she has volunteered both in and out of the U.S. and has started her own nonprofit, Onwards Inc. with her brother to simultaneously alleviate poverty and transform the travel industry.

### **You're originally from Southern Wisconsin- how did Eau Claire get on your radar?**

I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, I just knew that I didn't want to go to school too close to home and needed a university with a wide variety of majors to choose from. My dad actually studied at UW-Eau Claire, so I went to tour it and ended up really liking the campus and chose to study there.

### **Were there any organizations or extra opportunities UW-Eau Claire offered that stood out to you as being especially helpful?**

There was an event planning class that I took that really stood out to me. In it, we planned this weekend-long event for alumni grandparents and their grandkids and we planned the whole thing. I really enjoyed how the university took a class and made it really easy for students to get real-world experience. There were also a lot of guest speakers that came to the university. Some of them really helped drive a lot of the dreams and aspirations that I had.

### **You work at a nonprofit now. Did you always know that was what you wanted to do?**

Before I went to college I hadn't given nonprofit work a lot of thought, but I did always want to help people. I think that's why I started off as a science major. My family has many professionals in the health care field and that's how they helped people. After I switched my major, I started my internship with the Eau Claire Community Foundation which definitely influenced my desire to work in nonprofits.

### **It looks like you volunteered for a while right after graduation, do you think those programs steered you toward what you do now?**

Yeah, once I graduated I knew I wanted to go abroad and get out of Wisconsin for a while. First, I went to Oregon and volunteered with AmeriCorps. I worked on setting up and promoting a new program. There was a lot of going to local events, writing press releases, so that's where my public relations education came in handy. Then I went to Honduras, because I felt like I was losing my Spanish and I wanted to work on that. No matter what you do in the future you have to communicate, so it's always helpful to have strong communication skills.

### **Could you tell me a bit about what you did right after college?**

After Honduras I decided I wanted to go back to school, so I went back to UW-Milwaukee to get my master's. It was easy to find a job, but it wasn't necessarily easy to find exactly what I wanted to do. I ended up working for the Alzheimer's Association in Milwaukee for two years as a development coordinator. It was

directly related to my experience in Eau Claire, and was sort of a stepping stone to my current position with Milwaukee Riverkeeper. My true passion was in travel though, so I started a nonprofit with my brother in 2012. We've both spent a lot of time abroad and loved it, so we started Onwards Inc., which promotes tourism by providing micro-enterprise development services to aid local entrepreneurs starting or expanding tourism-based businesses in developing countries. Now I'm both the president of the board at Onwards Inc. and still work with Milwaukee Riverkeeper as its Development and Operations Manager.

### **What is one piece of advice you would give prospective students?**

The more opportunities you have to work outside of the classroom, the better. Take in-class projects and make them helpful to real-world organizations. It gets you real world experience and looks good on a resume too.

***“Take in-class projects and make them helpful to real-world organizations. It gets you real world experience and looks good on a resume too.”***

Written By: Darrion Behrendt  
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# Jen Holubar

## Class of 2008



**Communications  
Consultant  
Wells Fargo  
Bloomington, MN**



BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – From corporate to nonprofit to baseball, Jen Holubar has done it all. As a communication major with a public relations emphasis from UW-Eau Claire, she has taken full advantage of the variety that a communication degree offers and has had many learning experiences along the way. Even in her current job, Jen enjoys the wide array of responsibilities and the opportunity to wear many different hats.

### **What did you do after graduation?**

The communication field is very broad so I didn't know exactly which direction I wanted to go. After graduation, I went back to my hometown of Rochester, Minnesota and started interning for a semi-pro collegiate baseball team, the Rochester Honkers, over the summer. I did a lot of marketing and advertising for different events throughout the season. When the season was over, they asked me to stay on as their Communications and Sales Director. Because it was a small baseball organization, I was able to do several different jobs.

### **What are some of your other job experiences?**

After the baseball team, I moved to the Twin Cities and began working for Target Corporation. I started out as an entry-level sourcing specialist. After several months, I found a job within the store communications team. I worked on transition guides and manuals for various store departments. Shortly after, I became the editor for their internal communications magazine. After some time, I decided I needed a break from the corporate world and went to work at a nonprofit organization called Spare Key. I was the communications director there until I moved to Wells Fargo where I am currently.

### **What is the most exciting part of your job?**

At Wells Fargo, I am the Communications Consultant for Business Payroll Services, a business line within the

corporation. All of the internal and external communication comes through me. When I was at Target, I was one of 20 people, but here I am one of one. Sometimes it can be stressful because there is a lot of work to be done. However, I enjoy getting my hands on many different communication materials, whether it is weekly newsletters, communication to our customers, or internal team member communication. I think it is exciting to work on different projects and network with other people. It has helped me grow as a person and develop myself professionally.

***“Being able to have those different experiences is key. Especially while you’re in college, taking on different internships or even working with different parts of the school is so beneficial.”***

### **How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?**

Many core classes were very helpful in teaching the different ways to successfully communicate. I think there were bits and pieces from all of my classes that I definitely use in my job today. I remember I organized a women's night out event for my project at Junior Achievement. I did the advertising and was responsible for all the donations. It was really fun and one of the reasons why I was interested in getting back into the nonprofit world. UW-Eau Claire

provided me with a lot of good experiences to help me get started in my career after I graduated.

### **What advice do you have for someone considering a communication degree?**

I would say that since communication is such a broad field to be in, don't be scared to try new things. As you can see from my own background, I've been in baseball, retail, nonprofit, and now I'm at a bank. Being able to have those different experiences is key. Especially while you're in college, taking on different internships or even working with different parts of the school is so beneficial. When I was in college I took on many different roles, and that has helped mold who I am today. It will also help you to narrow down what exactly you're looking for. Don't be afraid to span your horizons and look for different possibilities.

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# Lissa Greer

Class of 2009



**Hall Director  
UW-Eau Claire  
Eau Claire, WI**



EAU CLAIRE - Lissa Greer graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 2009 with a degree in public relations and has never left. Since graduating she has had three jobs, all of them at UW-Eau Claire. Lissa first worked for three years as a program coordinator for Blugold Beginnings and then was promoted to program director, a position she held for two years. While working for Blugold Beginnings, Lissa also was pursuing a master's degree in student affairs administration in higher education through UW-La Crosse. After finishing her master's degree in 2013, she applied and became the hall director at Katherine Thomas Hall. Lissa's career is just beginning, but she has learned a lot since she has graduated and is ready to share her knowledge.

## **What is your favorite part of your job?**

As a hall director, the daily adventures are always the most interesting part. There is always something happening that allows me to play a helpful role in students' lives. I enjoy working with students and helping them develop and grow. There are so many different parts of students' lives I see. Watching them be successful, while also being able to help students through hard times, is very rewarding. I enjoy being their coach and helping them whenever I can.

## **How did you choose your career?**

Originally I wanted to do public relations for a nonprofit, but while working as an orientation assistant during my undergraduate years, I saw that I also wanted to work at the college level. When I started working for Blugold Beginnings I was able to combine my desires to work for a nonprofit and in the higher education field. Blugold Beginnings works with students in the Eau Claire community to inspire them to want to go to college and help them believe they can. I knew I wanted to do more in higher education, so after I received my master's degree I heard working as a hall director was a good place to begin my career. When this position opened, I took the chance.

## **How did UW-Eau Claire and the public relations program prepare you for your career?**

UW-Eau Claire allowed me a lot of opportunities to network. I made connections through the faculty and staff I met while working as an orientation assistant, and the support I received from those staff members helped me receive my first job. The skills I learned in public relations and communication classes helped me build the Blugold Beginnings program. The idea of Blugold Beginnings originally came from Associate Dean Jodi Thesing-Ritter. She was awarded funding for starting this initiative and then hired me so I could make her idea a reality in the Eau Claire community.

***"It will be okay if everything is not perfect. Always strive for perfection; but know you will not always reach it, and that is okay."***

## **What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you first started your career?**

It will be okay if not everything is perfect. Always strive for perfection; but know you will not always reach it, and that is okay. For a while I wanted everything to be perfect, but I learned that some things are out of my control, and it will be okay.

## **Is there anything you would have done differently when you first started working?**

Nothing. When I started working I threw everything into building Blugold Beginnings. I wanted to prove myself. I spent a lot of time on the program and I got a lot out of it. The entire experience was rewarding.

## **What is the most important advice you can offer someone just starting out in the communications field, or right after graduation?**

Be patient, you never know where your next job will come from. Remember, networking works. It can and usually will help you find a job. I remember in college I heard about networking all the time and I never believed it would help, but it did. Without networking I may not be where I am today.

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# Kacey Gregerson

## Class of 2006



**Academic Adviser**  
**University of Minnesota**  
**Maple Grove, MN**



MAPLE GROVE, Minn. - Kacey Gregerson graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in May 2006 with a degree in mass communication: public relations. Following her time at UW-Eau Claire, she attended Minnesota State University-Mankato where she received her master's degree in counseling and student personnel. Currently, Gregerson works at the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota as an academic adviser. She lives in Maple Grove, Minnesota with her family.

### **How tough was it to find a job right out of school?**

I didn't really try too hard to find a job. I think I applied for three different positions but I knew that I wanted to go on for my master's, so I was more focused on applying to graduate programs while I was at Eau Claire. I knew the economy was down so I thought that would be a better option.

### **How did the CJ department at UW-Eau Claire help prepare you for your career?**

I work as an academic adviser at the University of Minnesota so my career is in higher education. I would say the writing and critical thinking skills that I gained from the CJ department at UW-Eau Claire were second to none. I can look at a document and kind of pull out what the most important things are. So I think that's one of the biggest skills that I can still say I received from my education at UW-Eau Claire. My career isn't directly in public relations, but I think the skills that I gained from it have helped me in my career.

### **What is the most important piece of advice you can give to someone wanting to enter your field?**

As an adviser, a lot of times if you want to work at a four year school you need a master's degree. When looking at programs in higher education, it's important to find one that offers practical experiences. I would say if you can get a graduate assistantship that would help immensely. First, because it helps pay for it. Most of my graduate program

was paid for through my graduate assistantship. Then the other thing is to be willing to start at a smaller school so that you can get experience before you reach out to the bigger schools.

### **What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were in school?**

I will probably have a different approach to this than a lot of other alumni. I think I have a much better appreciation for the liberal arts. To be honest, I probably would have been more willing to study sociology or English literature for my major. Public relations was a safe choice because if

nothing else, there are jobs as a public relations specialist, whereas there aren't as many jobs as a sociologist. So I wish I would've taken a bigger risk and majored in what I really enjoyed and loved versus the mass communication classes. I liked the mass communication classes and am appreciative to the department for what they've done. Being able to pull out hard facts quickly out of a large text is something I'm very grateful for.

***"I would say that the writing and critical thinking skills that I gained from the CJ department at UW-Eau Claire were second to none."***

### **What is the most exciting part of your job?**

I work with a lot of students who are interested in health careers or pursuing pre-med, so for me the most exciting part is when students realize what their strengths are and are willing to pursue their passions. I get students who say "Yeah I am actually really good at journalism," and so helping them realize their strengths is something I enjoy. The other part is the professional development. Because I work in higher education there's that energy of learning. Because of that I get to continue to learn myself. That was part of the reason I wanted to work in education, I just love the atmosphere and the energy that comes with being on a college campus.

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# Mandy Runge

Class of 2005



**Manager of Market  
Development  
Oakwood Villa Nursing Home  
Eau Claire, WI**



EAU CLAIRE - Mandy Runge has a passion for her work, yet working in health care was never part of her plan. She had always dreamed of living in New York and working for a movie firm. Much to her surprise, a career in health care as a Manager of Market Development at Oakwood Villa Nursing Home has led to many great experiences and stories.

## **How did the university's public relations program prepare you for your career?**

It's been 10 years now, but learning how to be comfortable in front of a crowd and being able to know how to handle difficult situations are what comes to mind.

## **What is the most important advice you can give someone who wants to get into your field?**

Well, I can give you a couple things. The first is being able to relocate. In this area, you are not going to find a lot of specific public relations jobs. If you are willing to go into marketing, advertising, or sales you have more options there. Start small, and work your way up. That is always a good way to do it.

## **What has been the most interesting or exciting part of your job?**

The most interesting part is that I never planned on working in health care, ever. I wanted to work for a movie firm. I wanted to work for a big company, and I wanted to be in New York. I wanted to be in the big time. But things happened and I stayed here with my husband, but I didn't think I would be in health care. I didn't realize how big of a world health care was, and public relations and health care are huge fields. I also get to meet with a lot of people from different fields

from different walks of life. I also do admission assessment. So, I actually get to meet most of the people in the hospital, hear their stories, help them out, and see their faces when they walk out the door. It is just a great experience. I really like my job.

## **What did you do immediately after you graduated from college?**

The first job I got out of college was as a Spanish interpreter, because my minor was Spanish business. I did not do anything in the public relations field. I went to Whitehall, Wisconsin where I was a Spanish interpreter for the school district, hospital, and police station. I got that job four or five months after college and was there for two years.

***"I get to meet most of the people in the hospital and see their faces when they walk out the door. It is just a great experience. I really like my job!"***

## **How do you balance your work and personal life?**

That is difficult. My job is 24/7 as an admissions representative. I have a lot of help at my building right now. I have people who can help me if I need some time off. But it really is making sure you take that time you have with your family where the phone is not going off and making the most you can of it. It really is making sure when I am at work I am being very efficient and trying to get as much done as I can, so I am not bringing work home. But then again my coworkers are a very important piece of that because they are able to help me out.

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# Abby Czeskleba

## Class of 2007



**Copy Editor**  
**AICPA**  
**Durham, NC**



DURHAM, NC – Abby Czeskleba, a graduate from UW-Eau Claire in 2007, has found her calling in the editing field. After graduating with a bachelor of arts in public relations she worked as a children’s book editor. Since that position she has worked at three other editing and communications jobs. She currently works as a copy editor for the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

### **How did UW-Eau Claire and the communication and journalism department prepare you for your career?**

The courses I took really helped me learn how to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing. In a past position I had to communicate with authors and occasionally provide constructive criticism. I also worked as a liaison between business and IT teams in a different position where I had to understand both sides of the communication. I gained experience at UW-Eau Claire that helped with both of those careers.

### **What has been the most exciting or interesting part of your job?**

AICPA is a national company that works as a rule-making and standard-setting body for public accountants. It is a nonprofit that is very well known to certified public accountants and those in the accounting field. The position at this organization gave me a chance to get back into editing, which is what I wanted to do.

### **What kind of extracurricular activities did you participate in at the university that helped you feel comfortable getting into the professional world?**

I got involved with the forensics team at the university, which really enhanced my public speaking. In my professional career, I have given several presentations and the experience I gained on the forensics team made me feel more confident with public speaking.

### **What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

I have learned that the communication and journalism department offers experiences that are relevant to several career opportunities outside of communications. I was looking into a position as a technical writer and I had felt like my skill set as an editor just did not align with that work. As I looked into it more I realized that a lot of the skills overlap. For example, paying attention to detail, documenting information, communicating clearly, and having good writing skills are important in both areas. I now know that the experiences you can gain in your profession are not limited to what’s in your job title.

***“I now know that the experiences you can gain in your profession are not limited to what’s in your job title.”***

### **What is the most important advice you can give to someone wanting to get into your field?**

Seek out opportunities to grow or maintain your skill set. Doing work outside of your profession is a great way to improve your variety of skills. I volunteered to do editing for my local church to build up my skills. I believe that doing that volunteer work

helped me get the position I have now. Volunteering showed that I was passionate about editing and interested in maintaining my editing skills in my free time.

### **Do you have any advice for incoming freshmen who might choose a communication and journalism major?**

I think that communication skills are extremely valuable within the professional world, especially public speaking. It is something that sets you apart and it is obvious if you are lacking public speaking skills. The skills I gained in the communication and journalism department were invaluable. The skills you can learn in the department can lead you into many different professions and make you a strong asset.

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# Jody Stollendorf

## Class of 2005



**Community Giving and  
Event Coordinator  
Summit Credit Union  
Madison, WI**



MADISON - Starting out as an English major, Jody Stollendorf switched fields her sophomore year of college to communication and journalism where she would find her passion in event planning. She graduated in 2005 with a degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations and a minor in English literature. Just six months later, Jody received her first job in event planning with Madison Festivals. After seven years there, she began her current job as the Community Giving and Event Coordinator at Summit Credit Union in Madison.

### **What made you pick your major?**

That is a funny story actually. I was an English major until my sophomore year of college when I started thinking about what I wanted to do for a career. I really wanted to be an event planner, and English was not going to get me there. I switched my major at the end of my sophomore year and it was the right decision to get into the field that I wanted.

### **Would you recommend the CJ department at UW-Eau Claire to incoming students?**

I would definitely recommend the CJ department. I came in as a freshman and public relations sounded like the opposite of what I wanted to do. But once I got into the program, I found that I loved it and really got to branch out in the department. A lot of it is due to the small classes that UW-Eau Claire has. You get to have a lot more individual focus and opportunity for leadership roles than you would in a large lecture class.

### **Were there any specific courses you took that really prepared you for your career?**

I think the crisis communication class prepared me more than any. Problems are going to come up, and a huge part of event planning is putting out fires. Learning how to handle the situations that come up the best way that

you can is extremely important. The public relations writing class was helpful as well, in being able to communicate both verbally and through writing.

### **How important are internships?**

Internships are very important. I had a great professor who taught CJ 300 research methods who said take as many as you possibly can. Do not worry about getting paid. I have benefitted from every single one of my internships. For example, I worked with the Brewers as a research intern giving surveys to fans. While it was not always the most fun, I learned from that internship and figured out that was not what I wanted to do for my career. I then had an internship at the Milwaukee Zoo as an events intern. I completely loved it and found that event planning was what I was passionate about.

### **What do you value most from your time at UW-Eau Claire?**

There are so many opportunities to branch out and follow your interests. Take advantage of the diversity in classes offered both within the department and for your

general education requirements. You never know when you will use what you learned. Enjoy this short time in college where you can really follow your interests.

### **Do you have any advice for students entering the job market?**

Do not jump into a job after graduation just for the salary. There are bills to pay and you want to get going in your career, but be selective. Be selective about what job you pick and the people you will be working with. It can really benefit you in the long run in finding the perfect job that you are truly passionate about.

***“Enjoy this short time  
in college where you  
can really follow your  
interests.”***

Written By: Nicole Eastman  
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# Becky Glass

Class of 2007



**Business Owner**  
**The Eau Claire Fire House Bar**  
**Eau Claire, WI**

EAU CLAIRE – When Becky Glass graduated in 2007 she would have never guessed that she'd be where she is today, owning a popular downtown bar, The Eau Claire Fire House, with her husband. She graduated with a double major in scientific and technical writing and mass communication with an emphasis in public relations, which lead her to a variety of positions before she made the big decision to open The Fire House.

## **How did your time at UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your life after college?**

I spent almost three years trying to decide what my major should be. The positive side of that was that I had the opportunity to take all kinds of classes that interested me. I really don't think UW-Eau Claire has a program that could be a bad choice. All of the programs offer a really well-rounded education and I think that's exactly what I got.

## **Why did you choose to study public relations?**

I always knew that I liked English and I liked to write, but I didn't so much like creative writing. I was interested in technical writing for companies, which is what led me to declaring the scientific and technical writing major. I decided that the public relations major would be the most practical way to tie all of my interests together. I knew I could use the major if I became interested in journalism or web writing for companies, which were the types of jobs I was considering at the time. I just think that an education in public relations can be valuable in all aspects.

## **What kind of work did you do after you graduated?**

I worked at RCU here in Eau Claire for about five years. I started out in a technical writing position, moved into an administrative assistant position, then to the marketing department. I thought the marketing position was very similar to public relations work. A lot of what I did dealt with community involvement. Then, about five years ago my husband, two business partners, and I opened The Eau Claire Fire House downtown. My husband and I ended up buying out our partners and own it ourselves now.

## **What is your favorite part of your job?**

I was 26 when we opened The Fire House. I'm still fairly young and being able to say at my age that I opened a successful business is a huge accomplishment. Nothing beats the pride that I have from that. When you take a risk like I did, people always look at you like you're crazy, but now I can show those people that I did know what I was doing. It wasn't easy, but I can definitely say that I don't think you ever work harder than when you work for yourself.

## **What was your inspiration for opening The Eau Claire Fire House?**

I was really just in the right place at the right time. My family was always in the restaurant business and my husband and I were both bartenders throughout college. On top of that, he's really into craft beer. It just seemed like a really good idea.

## **What advice do you have for college students now?**

Make the most of your education. I was undeclared a long time because I didn't want to choose a path I wouldn't be happy with. After trying out different classes, I was able to find something I was passionate about. Also, I'm not saying to neglect your schoolwork,

but make sure you have fun in college. Go get involved. There are so many opportunities - intern, volunteer, and join clubs. Make connections outside of the campus community because those are the people who might help you out in the future. Also, make sure you're open to opportunities. You don't need to be so focused on getting a job that's in your major. So many people I graduated with have jobs that have nothing to do with what they studied. Don't overlook opportunities, because they could be leading you to something better down the road. I certainly never planned to open the bar. Be willing to try new jobs or to move. Just be sure that you have a passion for what you're doing.

***“You don't need to be so focused on getting a job that's in your major. Don't overlook opportunities, because they could be leading you to something better down the road.”***

Written By: Olivia Edwards  
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# Katie Sharratt

## Class of 2004



**Marketing Communications  
Associate**  
**Menasha Packaging Company**  
**Neenah, WI**



NEENAH - Katie Sharratt dreamed of going to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire since she was 13 years old. When she graduated in 2004 with a degree in marketing and a minor mass communication with an emphasis in public relations, she always thought she would move on to work for a major retailer like Target. Katie was happily surprised to find her life and career led her back to her hometown area where she has found an opportunity to work with many retailers. For the past three years she has worked as the Marketing Communications Associate for Menasha Packaging Company. She is part of the team responsible for the marketing and communications strategy for Menasha's entire North American operations, meaning she leads the public relations, social media, and the recent redesign of the entire website, just to name a few.

### **How did your marketing and public relations education prepare you for your career?**

Marketing and communications are passions that you either have or don't have. My classes taught me the fundamentals that were necessary to understand the day-in and day-out of completing a job. I felt UW-Eau Claire prepared me to put up with a lot of stress, manage time, and be flexible. I learned how to manage multiple skills, multiple people, and multiple expectations. Not only did I learn how to understand my audience, but also how to communicate with them and which tools would help me communicate successfully.

### **What did you do immediately after graduation?**

I started in manufacturing right out of college. You just need a first company to give you a chance, so it's essential to make a good first impression with companies. Since there are so many people with college degrees, it really comes down to who you are as a person. UW-Eau Claire was able to help me beyond marketing and communications as a career. I was able to learn how to

market and communicate about myself. I was hired at RB Royal Industries right out of college specifically because they wanted someone newly graduated with fresh ideas.

### **What was unexpected about your career path after graduation?**

I always pictured myself moving to Minneapolis to work for a major retailer like Target. I ended up moving back to my hometown and eventually working at Menasha Packaging Company, but in a way I get to work with a bunch of retailers on their brands, brand standards, and brand personality. Another surprise was that all three jobs I've had since graduating have been at privately-owned or family-owned companies. Now that I think about it, I probably subconsciously made that decision because of UW-Eau Claire. With smaller classes, my professors got to know me as a person rather than a number. I took that to heart and began to look for that same appreciation in my career as well.

### **What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were still in school?**

First, I wish that I had studied more. But more importantly, college was an experience that I went in expecting to get an education because I needed it for the job that I wanted. What I didn't realize was that going to UW-Eau Claire helped me grow as a person too.

### **What advice do you have for current marketing and communication students?**

They should know that they made a brilliant career move because marketing and communication are everything in life, no matter where you work. Don't forget to keep learning and keep fighting for what you want because you will eventually work your way there, even if it's not what you originally expected.

***“Don't forget to keep learning and keep fighting for what you want because you will eventually work your way there, even if it's not what you originally expected.”***

Written By: Leah Engebretson  
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# Brenda Kruse

Class of 2004



**Academic Operations Manager  
Walden University  
Minneapolis, MN**



MINNEAPOLIS – After double majoring in mass communication and marketing, Brenda started her career at Walden University in 2005 as a coordinator of academic residencies. She continued work in the president’s office shortly after. After ten years of working at Walden University, Brenda is now the academic operations manager. Brenda was dedicated to the unique learning experience that Walden offers online and has recently finished her master’s degree in organizational psychology this year.

## **Can you describe some of your daily activities at work?**

As the academic operations manager, I always have something new at work. I work with committees, manage projects, collaborate with teams, relay information to faculty, academic affairs, and occasionally writing communication to faculty. It is a nice change day-to-day. The diversity of Walden University is great. I really rely on strategic communication to get clear messages across virtually. Being an online school, clear messaging is vital to creating consistent communication to all members across the country.

## **Describe a difficulty in your career and how UW-Eau Claire prepared you.**

One challenge in my career was when I started working in the president’s office at Walden University. A new president was hired when I began. Creating a strategic plan for the faculty presented difficulties since we were both new and had steep learning curves. The UW-Eau Claire CJ department provided me with the knowledge on how to use different forms of communication for each unique situation, including virtual communication. I found myself successful when adapting to different communication situation due to the skills practiced in CJ classes.

## **Is there a class at UW-Eau Claire that you would recommend taking before graduating?**

Many of the classes at UW-Eau Claire were helpful in preparing me for my future career. I will always remember the unique hands-on experiences that I received. I walked into my public relations class in the fall of 2001 after 9/11 and our professor put her folders on the table and told us that we now worked for Southwest airlines. She asked us, “What do you do?” We then spent the rest of the semester acting as its public relations team, creating a campaign on how to

handle the situation. UW-Eau Claire gave me the opportunity to apply our skills to a real world situation compared to just reading case studies.

## **What would be your greatest piece of advice for someone looking at studying communications?**

You need to be flexible. There is constant change in the field. I see it every day. With social media, everything you do can and will get out to the public right away. More and more is becoming virtual. Walden University, being an online school, makes strides in the changes of virtual information. Working with the internet and change is a must. If you aren’t comfortable with change, now would be the time to become comfortable.

## **What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

I wish I would have spent more time with career services. UW-Eau Claire offered resources on how to move to the next phase of my life but I did not reach out and take them. It would have been helpful as a senior to really look into where I could go with event planning.

***“Working with the internet and change is a must. If you aren’t comfortable with change, now would be the time to become comfortable.”***

Written By: Jessica Finman  
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# Mary Arneson

## Class of 2005



**Marketing &  
Communications Program  
Manager**  
Fraser  
Minneapolis, MN



MINNEAPOLIS – When Mary Arneson was in school, she didn't know exactly what she wanted for a career. She knew she liked communication and that she wanted to work with people. However, she wanted a degree that was broad enough to mold into whatever passion she discovered. In 2005 Mary graduated with a degree in public relations from UW-Eau Claire and has been able to mold that degree into her job as a Marketing & Communications Program Manager at Fraser - a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis that provides housing, healthcare and education to children and adults with special needs.

### **How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?**

The public relations aspect of my mass communication degree was great because it taught me how to work with different types of media. When I was in school, the classes included a lot of formal PR practices, such as press releases. Now, communication is more informal with social media, but I still feel that my classes gave me a good basis of knowledge to navigate all the different forms of communication. Something else that was helpful from my time here was joining communication themed student organizations. Those organizations were able to help me connect with other students who had the same degree and helped me get to know people in my classes outside of class. These are skills I've carried with me into my career at Fraser because I learned good technical skills and perfected my interpersonal communication skills.

### **What advice do you have for people looking to go into the non-profit sector?**

It's important to find an internship and volunteer regardless of what field you want to go into after you graduate. It looks good on a resume and helps you get your foot in the door of non-profit organizations. Whether you gain experience from an internship or from volunteering, be sure to network wherever you go. Getting your name

out to a variety of people and companies can help you make connections for jobs and internships after you graduate.

### **How do you balance your work and personal life?**

Starting a family made me restructure my priorities. Family comes first for me. Luckily I have a job that I love that allows me to incorporate my family into what I do. At Fraser, we have fundraising events that my family attends. On top of that, Fraser also has a school for students with a wide variety of abilities that my daughter attends. Even though I'm at work, my daughter is there with me.

***“A mass communication degree was broad enough that I knew I could let it grow with me and mold it into whatever field I decided to go into after graduation.”***

### **Did you always want to go into the communication field?**

It's hard to know what you want to do with your life when you're 18, but I did know that I wanted to do something with communication. I knew I didn't want to do anything specific like being a nurse or teacher, but I wanted to work with people, and I've always enjoyed writing. A mass communication degree was broad enough that I knew I could let it grow with me

and mold it into whatever field I decided to go into after graduation.

### **What has been the most exciting part of your job?**

It's when I get to meet the families our organization works with, even though I don't do direct care. I get to hear how the organization I work for changed their lives, and I get to see my efforts directly. Another really rewarding part of working at Fraser is supporting events. There are different challenges that come up with planning and executing, but it's an opportunity to celebrate the work we do and the people we serve.

Written By: Kallie Friede  
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# Shannon DiMarco

## Class of 2005



**Lab Manager  
UW-Madison  
Madison, WI**



MADISON - During the day she works as a UW-Madison lab research manager, however, that does not define Shannon DiMarco. She is also a mother, wife, dance instructor, and CrossFit enthusiast. The one thing that has stayed constant for DiMarco has been her love of communication. Whether it is at her job, in her home, or participating in her hobbies, DiMarco's communication skills have been a key component for her success in life.

### **What inspired you to become a public relations major?**

I originally came to UW-Eau Claire and was planning on majoring in elementary education. However, I ended up changing my major two years into my college career. My dad passed away after my sophomore year, and when I returned home to Minneapolis there was a public relations internship opportunity with the Minneapolis Aquatennial. The opportunity fell into my lap and I went with it. After interning with the Minneapolis Aquatennial I realized that a major in education was not for me, and I began to focus more on communication and public relations.

### **How did majoring in PR affect your professional career?**

Even though I am not directly working in a public relations industry, or at a public relations firm, UW-Eau Claire helped prepare me for the communication side of my job and my professional career. I was involved with the International Association of Business Communicators for four semesters, and even served as vice president. During that time I had to organize a retreat to Minneapolis. I remember talking to real business professionals, and realizing that everything they were saying they look for in potential candidates UW-Eau Claire had prepared me for.

### **What is your current job?**

I work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and I run a research lab. As far as communication goes I am in control of the public relations for the individual lab itself,

and all of the communication and the press releases that come from the lab. We are a research lab that helps assess clinicians and how well they perform different procedures.

### **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I like the communication I have with other people. I worked in the private sector for a long time before I worked in the public sector, and I've worked in professional training for adult learners. I really liked learning how adults can learn differently than younger individuals. I was really looking for a career that put me in health care. For me to use the adult learning techniques I've acquired, and my communication skills I've gained from UW-Eau Claire, I've really been able to adapt my lab to be more innovative in its communication.

### **How do you balance your work life and family life?**

I hit the ground running each day. At 7a.m. I drop my daughter off, and around 5p.m., my family is altogether. We have dinner together every night and we have family time until my daughter goes to bed. I also keep a continuous to-do list in order to help balance everything that needs to get

done. It is made up of things I need to do at work and at home. It is usually made up of my main priorities.

### **What advice would you give to someone looking to start a career in public relations?**

It's a tough field to get into especially if you are looking to get straight into the public relations industry. Internships are key. One of my biggest regrets is not participating in an internship my senior year of college. I think I hurt my job path a little bit by not trying to aggressively stick with finding an internship. My main points of advice are, if you have the opportunity, apply for as many internships as you can, or plan on moving onto a master's program in public relations immediately after you graduate from college.

***"I remember talking to real business professionals, and realizing that everything they were saying they look for in potential candidates UW-Eau Claire had prepared me for."***

Written By: Kate Harrison  
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# Katie Date

Class of 2004



**Corporate Outreach  
Coordinator  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology  
Cambridge, MA**



CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – After graduating from UW-Eau Claire in 2004, Katie Date was determined to achieve her dream of working for a professional sports team in a public relations position. In 2009, she was seeking adventure and was ready for a big change. This led her to the east coast, where she accepted her current job as a Corporate Outreach Coordinator for the school of engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Working for a professional sports team is no longer her dream job. She is very happy in her current position, and continues to be open-minded about what the future may hold.

## **How has UW-Eau Claire, specifically the communication and journalism department, prepared you in your career?**

Since graduating from UW-Eau Claire, the writing skills that I have learned while I was in the communication and journalism department, as well as the public speaking and presentation skills, have come in handy during all of the roles I have had.

## **What do you know now that you wish you would have known while you were at UW-Eau Claire?**

I wish I would not have been so hard on myself. I was very narrowly focused and only wanted to apply for certain types of jobs, because I wanted to do public relations for a professional sports team. I wish I would have looked a little bit more broadly, because I probably missed out on some opportunities along the way. Had I looked a little more broadly at the degree that I was receiving and the life skills that I was learning, who knows where I would have landed.

## **What exactly do you do in your current position as a Corporate Outreach Coordinator?**

As a Corporate Outreach Coordinator, my main job is to be the communicator between the researchers, lab, and the corporations who are sponsoring the research. I make sure the money that is being used for the research is being allocated in the correct way. I also oversee the planning of events and help get the researchers' names out there by working with different media outlets so they can write different articles and papers.

## **What do you like the most about your current job?**

Coming from someone who is from the Midwest, it is humbling to work at such a prestigious institution and to have your ideas really valued. Working at MIT, I am surrounded by some of the most brilliant people in the world, including people who have won the Nobel Prize and others who work for Fortune 500 companies. I also love knowing that when the technology being tested in the lab comes into the marketplace five to ten years from now, I saw it so much sooner than everyone else.

## **Do you see yourself working at MIT for a long time?**

I really really love what I do. But, will I always work for MIT? I don't know. I love working with the different companies, and also all the scientists and engineers. It is really cool having the ability to be the person in the middle communicating with them. I am really happy with where I am right now, but there is only so far you can go and I am really trying to keep myself open to opportunities. I do think, though, that project management in some sort of capacity will always be a part of my future roles.

## **Do you have any important advice to give students who are looking into a career in public relations?**

My advice to anyone looking into a career in public relations is to be open-minded. I had a job as a recruiter before I worked for MIT, and I worked with a lot of recent college graduates who had huge, high expectations coming out of college. They thought they would have these big important jobs with big expense accounts, but you have to learn to be humble and take whatever comes your way. Don't be afraid to get your hands a little dirty and learn as much as you can, because it helps you build throughout your career. Also, make sure you make time for yourself. Right after college, I spent way too much time working and not enough time developing me. I now have taken up different hobbies, and I am so much happier.

***“Don't be afraid to get your hands a little dirty and learn as much as you can, because it helps you build throughout your career.”***

Written By: Micaela Hauptert  
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# Kara Watt

Class of 2005



**Senior Digital Media Buyer**  
**National Media**  
**Washington, D.C.**



WASHINGTON - Have you ever dreamed of moving to Washington for your dream job? Kara Watt achieved this goal after graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with a double major in public relations and political science. Kara attended UW-Eau Claire from 2000 to 2005. She now lives in the Washington area with her family and works for a media research, planning and placement firm called National Media. Kara also is the Executive Director of the Washington Media Scholars Foundation, and is in control of the day-to-day operations, fundraising, and special events.

## **What was your favorite memory of the CJ department?**

The CJ department was one of the best departments on campus. All of the classes were well organized and valuable for my future, even though I did not know it at the time. My favorite professor, Terry Chmielewski, was the most memorable. He was so knowledgeable with public relations and communication in general. I definitely learned the most from him.

## **How did the CJ department prepare you for your future?**

The CJ department prepared me for all sorts of different professional situations. Learning to write was the most valuable skill I learned from the CJ department. You will not get very far without knowing how to write professionally. You have to write every day in the professional world and I am so glad that I learned the essential writing skills for professional writing.

Written By: Ashley Klein  
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## **Were you a part of any extra-curricular activities on campus?**

I was a part of the Women's Concert Chorale (WOCO) and a member of the UW-Eau Claire College Republicans. I was also on the financial board for Student Senate. I was also involved with the Eau Claire county finance board. These experiences really helped me shape my future and helped me to decide what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

## **What was your favorite memory at UW-Eau Claire?**

My favorite memory was definitely going to the Viennese Ball every year with my friends. The first year I did not really know if it was my kind of thing, but all of my friends were going, so I decided to go, and it was the best decision. I fell in love with it and went every year after that. The campus really transformed into an elegant Austrian scene and it was so magical.

***“Learning to write was the most valuable skill I learned from the CJ department. You will not get very far without knowing how to write professionally.”***

## **What are you doing now?**

I now live near Washington in Alexandria, VA with my husband and our family. I work for a media company called National Media. Our company is one of the largest Republican communications planning and implementation agencies in the United States. We manage strategic media services for hundreds of campaigns and companies. I am a senior digital media buyer and currently I am working with a hospital located in Florida. Although media buying is a major part of my job, my favorite part is being the executive director of the Washington Media Scholars Foundation. Each summer I get to bring scholarship winners, who have participated in and won the Media Plan Case Competition, to Washington for Media Scholars Week, expense-free. To enter the Media Plan Case Competition, you have to be a student enrolled at a university and at least 18 years of age.

# Amber Schiessl

## Class of 2010



**Assistant Director of  
Graduate Admission**  
Concordia University Wisconsin  
Mequon, WI



MEQUON - The first time Amber Schiessl graduated was in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in music. After taking a year off to think about what she wanted to do, she returned to UW-Eau Claire to finish a second bachelor's degree in public relations. Five years later, she is currently working as the assistant director of graduate admission at Concordia University Wisconsin with a strong sense of adventure and love of life.

### **What did you do after you graduated in 2010?**

Shortly after I graduated I got a job at a small, private college in Onalaska. I worked as an admissions counselor there, however it wasn't a very good fit for me, so I was only there for about ten months. It was after that when I got my job at Concordia. I started as an admissions counselor at an off-campus center. Two years after that, I moved up to Mequon where I became assistant director of graduate admission, which is where I am now.

### **What do you do as assistant director of graduate admission?**

I primarily work with teachers and professionals who are looking to continue their education in one of the 13 different graduate programs I work with here. I do things like go to conferences, hold information sessions, and work with our program directors to figure out school districts to target so we can tailor master's degrees to them. I also meet with potential students, help them through the admissions process, and answer any questions they may have.

### **What is your favorite part of your job?**

My favorite part of my job is the fact that it is different every day. I get to meet different people, learn their stories, and figure out how I can help them with their educational and career goals. Everybody needs something different and it's fun to see what we can do to help them.

Written By: Ella Koch  
kochen@uwec.edu

### **How did UW-Eau Claire and the public relations program prepare you for your career today?**

The program really helped me learn the importance of communicating clearly and being concise. It taught me how to get the important parts out first so you don't confuse anybody or lose their attention. For my job, I have to create flyers, make announcements about programs starting, and communicate through emails, which I practiced at UW-Eau Claire. I also worked in the Center for International Education, which helped me realize that I liked working in higher education. My experiences helped fuel my sense of adventure, which has prepared me for anything that might come up in my life today.

***“Take advantage of each situation you are in. Learn from them, meet people, network, and grow as a person.”***

### **What do you know now that you wish you would have known while you were in school?**

I wish I figured out what I wanted to do a bit sooner. I am happy I finished my degree in music, but I wish I would have figured out that I wanted to work in higher education sooner. However, I wouldn't be where I am today without having met certain people along the

way. When I went back for my public relations degree, I focused on getting experience in as many different areas as I could. The connections that I made in those two years were way more valuable than any of the connections I made while working on my first degree.

### **What advice do you have for current and future students in the communication and journalism department?**

Having patience is the most important thing. You might not find your dream job immediately after graduation, but if you are focused on it, you will get there. Focus on being happy with where you are and at the same time be ambitious. Take advantage of each situation you are in. Learn from them, meet people, network, and grow as a person. It might not be clear right now, but what you are currently doing will help prepare you for your ultimate goal, whatever that may be.

# Erin Bludau

Class of 2005



**Project Specialist**  
**Alcon, a Novartis company**  
**Fort Worth, TX**



FORT WORTH, Texas – After graduating, Erin Bludau was ready for a change of pace and warmer weather. She used her networking skills to make connections and moved to Las Vegas. At the time, it was a fast-growing city and she landed her first position as a project coordinator at Glen Smith and Glen Development just one week upon arrival. After accepting a couple growth opportunities at other companies, she eventually ended up in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas. Erin previously worked as a marketing communications specialist and marketing manager for a high-tech firm. She currently works for Alcon, a Novartis company, as a project specialist.

## **What are your responsibilities as a project specialist on the marketing team at Alcon?**

My position is focused on the U.S. vision care team, specializing in contact lenses. I work mainly on product launches for the company. I also work with the brand manager on business initiatives that impact the current product portfolio and future product launches.

## **How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?**

I loved attending UW-Eau Claire. The institution has great professors who are passionate about their field. It was great obtaining both in-class experiences as well as real life experiences. One of my favorite classes I took at UW-Eau Claire was intercultural communication. It opened my eyes on how communication is such a strong and important skill throughout different cultures.

## **What were those first years like after graduating?**

After graduating I moved to Las Vegas. At the time I had no job in the area. Luckily the city was growing at a fast pace when I moved there and it didn't take me long to land a job in the real estate and construction industry.

Written By: Hannah Lyder  
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## **Did you always plan on leaving the Midwest?**

When I first started college I thought I would move to the Twin Cities after graduation. I always knew I wanted to experience “big city life,” but didn't initially consider moving anywhere too far away. Then during my junior year I realized that my opportunities after graduation were endless and I decided I wanted to move somewhere new and warm. I knew I could do it because I have never been afraid of change. After making some connections, I moved to Las Vegas for four-and-a-half years, then picked up and moved to Dallas in 2010.

## **What is your favorite aspect of public relations?**

My favorite part about my job is product branding because it is a challenge. Throughout my career I have worked with many different products and it is important to narrow in on the industry to find the appropriate target audience.

Overall, it is hard to hone in on one aspect or skill because

I love multi-tasking and wearing multiple hats.

## **What do you know now, that you wish you had known when going to school?**

My first professional experiences after graduating from UW-Eau Claire were for small companies, where I gained a lot of knowledge. However, looking

back, I wish that I had worked for larger and more established companies to gain exposure on how large firms operate. I learned that if your goal is to work for a larger company, it is much easier to get your foot in the door if you've already worked for a company of that scale.

## **What is the most important advice you can give to someone entering your field?**

Make connections. It is so important to network no matter what field you want to go into. I found my first job in Las Vegas and Dallas via social network channels. Also, while you're still at the university, get involved outside of the classroom. Getting involved helps make more connections and gives you additional experiences to utilize in the future.

***“Make connections. It is important to network no matter what field you go into.”***

# Shannon Richards

## Class of 2006



**Planned Giving Manager  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
Milwaukee, WI**



MILWAUKEE – Many students begin college as undeclared, but Shannon Richards, a Watertown, Wis. native, knew she wanted to do event planning from the start. Before graduating in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations and minoring in sociology, she was able to experience hands-on event planning with an internship at the Boys and Girls Club of Eau Claire. After graduation, she headed over to Milwaukee and landed her dream job.

### **How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?**

Not only did it give me the education and communication skills I needed to succeed in my career, but it also helped me find my internship, which is where I gained insight and experience in the field I wanted.

The CJ department, in particular, really helped me enhance my writing skills. It's been very helpful with creating marketing and promotional materials.

### **What career did you go into after graduation?**

I briefly worked in human resources for Froedtert Hospital, but as soon as an event planning job opened up in the same complex, I took it. I've now been working for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, where my job mainly consists of fundraising efforts for the foundation. I moved on to special events coordinator, which allowed me to work on very rewarding projects, such as the Briggs & Al's Run and Walk. Afterwards, I took a position as Planned Giving Manager and it's led me to Children's Miracle Network Manager for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. I now work with all of the national partners that fundraise for children's hospitals, as well as still fundraising. I'm exactly where I always wanted to be.

### **How tough was it finding a job after graduation?**

It was a little tough, but I think a lot has changed since I graduated, so I had it easier than most recent graduates. I graduated in May and I didn't start working in a career-based job until September. Put yourself out there and keep making connections, and it will happen.

### **What has been the most rewarding part of your career?**

I've been working to run the Briggs & Al's Run and Walk in Milwaukee, which typically averages about 16,000 participants. This makes it one of the largest run and walk events in the country. I've been working on this event for the past six years and working with the patients and their families has definitely made it the most rewarding project of my career. It's always good to come out and celebrate the mutual support we all have for each other.

### **What CJ class stands out to you the most?**

I can't recall the exact name of the class, especially since it may have changed since I graduated, but Terry Chmielewski taught an upper division writing class. It really stands out to me because writing wasn't my biggest strength when I first started. I learned a lot of valuable skills from that class and it's ultimately molded the way that I write today.

### **What advice do you have for public relations students?**

Don't be afraid to sell yourself. It can be hard to talk about your accomplishments, but graduating from a four year university is really an accomplishment in itself. Go ahead and formulate what you achieved in those four years. Also, put yourself out there and network with professionals and even your peers. There are so many young professional organizations out there so don't be afraid to try them out.

***“Don't be afraid to sell yourself. It can be hard to talk about your accomplishments, but graduating from a four-year university is really an accomplishment in itself.”***

Written By: Juana Moya  
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# Laura Lazewski

## Class of 2004



**Recruiter**  
**Koppers Railroad Structures**  
**Philadelphia, PA**



PHILADELPHIA – For some people, the path to their dream career has been paved in their minds since childhood. For others, like 2004 mass communication graduate Laura Lazewski, the path to her job as a recruiter for a construction company wasn't as clear. Although she never planned on working in human resources, she now believes she has found a career that she can see herself in for the rest of her life.

### **What would you say was the most valuable aspect of your time at UW-Eau Claire?**

My favorite part was that the university is part of the National Student Exchange program. I was able to experience life at the University of Tennessee while still paying in-state tuition, which was important to me financially. I had a great experience there and learned a lot of things that I wouldn't have otherwise.

### **What led you to your job at Koppers?**

It took a long time to get to the place where I am now. At UW-Eau Claire, I was a mass communication major with an emphasis in public relations, and a marketing minor. Originally I wanted to work with professional sports teams, and so I thought that public relations would be the best way to get into that. I never thought that I'd ever be working in HR, but after I graduated, the economy was so bad that I was willing to take a chance on anything.

### **Were you hired as a recruiter straight out of school?**

No, the first thing I did after graduation was join AmeriCorps, which is like the domestic Peace Corps. I just wanted to get out of that college setting and do something different. Afterwards I moved to Madison, and began my work in construction. I ran an apprenticeship program at a construction trade association for five years, and it was sort of like being a guidance counselor and running a technical college. I really enjoyed it, but as always, life intervened and I ended up having to leave to go take care of some family members.

### **How did that affect your job search moving forward?**

I found that the common denominator in everything that I had done since college was that I loved working with people. I worked as a missionary in England for a while before coming back to the states and needing another job before I began bible school. I sent my resume out and found myself back in construction. I was hired as a six month temp, and then after I was done with bible schooling I was hired on as a recruiter, which I still am today. It's a great fit. I get to talk with people, learn about their experiences, see if they're a good fit for our company and then I get to give them a job. It's really fun.

***"I found that the common denominator in everything that I had done since college was that I loved working with people."***

### **Do you find that you use any of the skills you learned in the mass communication program at UW-Eau Claire in your job today?**

I've found that public relations and marketing really focus on the big-picture aspect of communication. I had internships all over the country, from Eau Claire to St. Louis to Knoxville where I used those skills. But in my job today I use my communication skills on a much

more intimate level, which I like more. As someone who works remotely from Philadelphia, I'm constantly reviewing applications, doing phone interviews and sitting in on conference calls, so it's always good to know how to interact well with people.

### **What's your favorite part of being a recruiter?**

What's really satisfying is when I hire someone and everything works out perfectly. It's really nice to find a worker who needs a job and who also meets our needs. It's nice to know that I'm working toward helping our company meet its goals. And, working with people is always interesting. I never know what they are going to tell me on the phone, so I have to be prepared for anything. It's never boring.

Written By: Kate Niestrom  
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# Craig Gumz

## Class of 2004



**Manager of New Business  
Development  
Minnesota Twins  
Minneapolis, MN**



MINNEAPOLIS – For Craig Gumz, a love of sports and a knack for sales has evolved into a successful 11-year career he didn't necessarily anticipate during his college years. After graduating with a public relations degree from UW-Eau Claire, unsure of his career path, Craig moved to Minneapolis to accept a part-time sales job for the Minnesota Twins. He was quickly promoted to a full-time sales position where he excelled for six years, often finishing as the top sales representative in his division. Today, he manages his own department of nine new business development representatives.

### **Did you know what you wanted to do following graduation?**

Not exactly. I enjoyed my time working in the UW-Eau Claire admissions office and believed that my career path could potentially involve working for an admissions department. Having an interest in sports, I also reached out to the Eau Claire Express baseball team for possible opportunities, but was told that it would be a few months before positions would become available due to the early stages the team was in. I ended up working at a local restaurant for the summer before accepting a position with the Twins in November.

### **Did you have any internship experience prior to graduating?**

I would consider my position in the admissions office to be my internship experience in college. I was conducting campus tours and visiting high schools on behalf of the university. I was given the chance to be heavily involved in a lot of the same tasks that were typically performed by admissions officers.

Written By: Katie Olsen  
olsenkm@uwec.edu

### **In what ways did UWEC prepare you for your career?**

I didn't know it at the time, but working for the admissions office indirectly gave me a lot of sales skills. While I was leading tours and talking to individuals and groups, I was selling the university to prospective students and their parents. It really helped me to polish my communication skills. By the time I graduated, I could easily start conversations with complete strangers.

### **What are some of your responsibilities within your position?**

In addition to managing new business acquisitions, I am also responsible for the hiring and training for sales positions within my department. My career has really come full circle. I am now in charge of hiring individuals for the position I was originally hired for.

### **What do you look for in potential candidates for your division?**

I receive hundreds of resumes. When considering candidates, I look for individuals who are clearly making an effort to stand out. This could include something as simple as finding my information on the Twins website and sending me an email expressing their interest in a position. These are the people who I will be much more inclined to interview.

### **Is there anything you would do differently if you were starting college today?**

Managing the hiring process within my department has made me realize that I would not have necessarily hired myself as a recent college graduate. UW-Eau Claire has so much to offer in terms of resources and opportunities to gain experience in your field that students need to take advantage of. If I was starting college today, I would pursue as many of these opportunities as I could, whether it was through campus organizations or internships. These are experiences that will set you and your resume apart when applying for jobs.

***“UW-Eau Claire has so much to offer in terms of resources and opportunities to gain experience in your field that students need to take advantage of.”***

# Mindy Schatz

Class of 2004



Stay at home mother  
Prior Lake, MN



PRIOR LAKE, MN – Mindy Schatz is a UW-Eau Claire graduate, who after working seven years in the strategic communications field is now a stay-at-home mother for her three children. Currently living in a suburb of Prior Lake, Schatz is the former Account Manager for INNOVA Marketing, a Minneapolis based marketing agency that specializes in experimental marketing and advertising. Working with notable clients such as Office Max, Mentos, Air Heads, and Gold'n Plump, she coordinated events and campaigns promoting their products and brands across the United States. Mindy is married to another UW-Eau Claire alumnus, who she met on her study abroad trip to Europe during her sophomore year.

## What was the favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job was the multitude of different things I was able to do in it. The diversity of my clients, the places I visited, and the people I met were really great aspects of my career. While I am not working in that position anymore I am still close friends with many of my former colleagues, and I think that is really important.

## What do you know now that you wish you had known in school?

I feel that it is extremely important to stand up for yourself and share your opinions on things. In my immediate job out of college I felt that I was timid and hesitant to present my own ideas. Even when you are new you can still offer very important things to an employer. Fresh out of college employees can offer important input, especially in a world where Twitter and Facebook are so important for self-promotion.

Written By: Zachary Paul  
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## What were some of the crazy things you did and that happened while you were doing your job?

In event marketing you do plenty of crazy things to promote brands. For one campaign with OfficeMax we toured the country with the world's largest rubber band ball. It had its own custom made trailer to move it and everything. We also organized one of the world's largest Mentos in Coke geysers in Philadelphia. Two crazy experiences I remember is when a Mentos convertible we were using for a promotion got into an accident, and another where a box truck we had carrying product was spray painted with graffiti. In those situations you have to stay calm and think on your toes while communicating with people who are often thousands of miles away.

***“The most important things you will learn in college are how to communicate, as well as form and maintain relationships.”***

## How do you balance work and your personal life?

One thing to remember is that your peers are all in the same situation. When I started in an entry level advertising position many of the people I worked with were a similar age to me. It helps to have people who understand your situation because they are going through the same thing. I find balancing your life to be much easier when coming out of college. It becomes harder when you want to start a family.

## How did your study abroad experience to England help you with public relations?

It helped a ton. You sometimes encounter problems when living or traveling abroad, and the ability to react quickly and calmly is required. My experience in the program taught me how to have on-the-fly reactions to situations that were sometimes out of my control. The most important things you will learn in college are how to communicate, as well as form and maintain relationships. Studying abroad helps strengthen all of those.

# Dr. Traci Kiernan

## Class of 2004



**Chiropractor and Owner of  
Natural State Health Center  
Little Rock, Ark.**



LITTLE ROCK, Ark.— Dr. Traci Kiernan, D.C. possesses a multitude of skills to assist her in her busy schedule. She received her minor in communication with an emphasis in public relations before attending chiropractic school. As a chiropractor and the owner of Natural State Health Center in Little Rock, Ark., Dr. Kiernan incorporates communication into her job every day. Dr. Kiernan is a wife, mother of two young children, public speaker in her community, published author, and radio show host. She has a book being published next month called “Getting to the Root of What Ails You,” and her radio show on Saturday mornings is called “Family Health Radio.”

### **How did you end up becoming a chiropractor and the owner of a chiropractic clinic within five years of receiving your undergraduate degree?**

I graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a major in political science, so I took a year off and did some traveling and took a few prerequisites before beginning chiropractic school in September 2005. I went to Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, Minn. I moved to Florida for the last three months of chiropractic school to work under a mentor of mine in Naples, Fla., and then graduated in November 2008. I went there to work and learn with the intention of opening my own office. I worked in Florida until April of 2009, while I was in the process of opening my own clinic in Arkansas.

### **How did your minor in communication prepare you for your career as a chiropractor?**

That is a great question because it has served me so well. Chiropractic is a very misunderstood profession, and in fact, I would say the perception of chiropractic isn't a very good one for the most part. There are a lot of people who have heard bad things or say that chiropractors are quacks. There's a lot that I've had to muddle through in my profession to really uphold what I do. Having a background in communication, particularly in public relations because it focuses on how you're perceived by the public, has really benefited me. I have the busiest

chiropractic clinic in the state of Arkansas, and I now employ three other doctors since opening in 2009. I think the very reason why I am successful as a chiropractor is because I can communicate effectively about what I do.

### **Which specific communication skills do you think have helped you become a successful business owner?**

I think they would have to be one-on-one communication, persuasion, public speaking and personality profiling. One of the things I use a lot in my practice is personality profiling – it is a really simple way to communicate with a person because you can better tell who they are. Specifically I use this approach with my employees – educating them on these skills and techniques helps them gauge their patients and treat them more effectively. I teach my team that the way they communicate is more

than just their words. Most of it is what their tone and body language is telling patients.

### **How do you balance work and your personal life?**

This is something I am continuously striving to master. My family, and putting God in the center of it, is the most important thing in my life. I would sell my practice tomorrow if

those things were falling apart. One thing my husband and I do every year is go away for the weekend and focus on all areas of our lives. We discuss why it is important for us to focus on each of those areas and then we set goals. We aren't whimsically going through our lives; we are being really purpose driven.

### **What has been the most interesting part of your job?**

I get to see so many amazing results each day. I have the privilege of taking care of a lot of people. One of the joys I have is being able to see people live up to their God-given potential.

Written By: Megan Martie  
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***“I think the very reason why I am successful as a chiropractor is because I can communicate effectively about what I do.”***

# Leslie Draper

## Class of 2004



**Account Manager**  
**Davidson Benefits Planning**  
**Portland, OR**



PORTLAND, Oregon – Leslie Draper, an alumna from Franklin, who studied mass communication, takes the time out of her day and her personal family life to correspond with me from all the way in Portland, Oregon. Leslie was very excited for the chance to share her journey and experience in the post-graduation world of professional communications, and I am very happy to tell her tale through this piece. What follows is a series of questions that I asked of Leslie to help explain her journey after graduating from UW-Eau Claire.

### **What did you immediately do after graduation?**

I moved to Portland a month after graduating in December of 2004. I went there because my brother lived out there and was looking for somewhere to work. I was then hired at a staffing firm that rented office space out to smaller entities. After a year of doing that, I acquired my insurance license and became an account coordinator at a different company.

### **How tough was it finding a job?**

Finding a job was not too bad at all. When I graduated, there was a very open market for jobs in the country, especially in Portland, and after a short amount of time I found one that fit my area of study.

### **What do you do now?**

I have been working at an insurance consulting firm called Davidson Benefits Planning ever since I got my insurance license. I am an account manager there and hold a book of business that contains twelve accounts that I am in charge of.

### **What is the most exciting or interesting part of your job?**

I really enjoy doing client appreciation where I go do activities with representatives. For example, I may take them out to dinner or go to sporting events or shows. It's a fun way to not only strengthen a professional relationship with your client, but a personal one too.

### **What is the most important advice you can give to someone wanting to get into your field?**

Get your foot in the door somewhere, it doesn't matter where, but stick with it and get experience. After that, you can always move on to other things.

Just use the skills you learn at school and your job to your advantage.

***“Get your foot in the door somewhere. It doesn't matter where, but stick with it and get experience.”***

### **How have you used the communication knowledge you gained at UW-Eau Claire in your career?**

I do a lot of meetings with employees to review benefits, so my speech classes were especially helpful with interpersonal and group communication. I have also spoken at some seminars and in front of a few company boards, so learning to be a comfortable communicator is a must.

### **In what other ways were you involved at UW-Eau Claire?**

Besides communication and journalism, I was also once involved in a business organization on campus. To be completely honest though, I remember my experiences in my classes and with colleagues much more vividly.

Written By: Wyatt Young  
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# Mark Lundin

Class of 2007



Vocal Music Teacher  
Memorial High School  
Eau Claire, WI

EAU CLAIRE - When you are in the communication field, many people will find that there is not only just one job you can do. Mark Lundin found that out personally by combining his two passions in life, communication and music. Mark has moved his way around the state but has more recently found his way back to the Chippewa Valley using both of his degrees that he obtained at UW-Eau Claire. Even as a music teacher his role is heavily communication and event planning based.

## What led you to UW-Eau Claire?

Starting out I came for the music department. I had been awarded a scholarship and my passion was for music. At the time I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with a music degree, however, after being on campus I found a nice home in the communication department.

## How did you choose mass communication as your double major?

I was always interested in communications and felt I could excel specifically in writing and public speaking. Being a mass communication major I was lucky enough to have an independent study and work as an event coordinator focusing on the music department. Being in CJ allowed me to combine my two passions.

## Since graduating with a degree in both CJ and music, what did you begin doing?

Initially I started out working as the communication manager for the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras. I was in charge of all the records, I wrote blogs, newsletters and other communications. It was through this job that I realized I wanted to be more involved in the music side. I decided to go back to school to get my teaching license.

## Can you explain more about how you got into teaching?

I realized through my work that I wanted to be more involved in helping people develop their own passions for music. After attending Edgewood College in Madison where I obtained my teaching licenses I was hired as a concert manager. I then found my way back to the Chippewa Valley as the vocal music teacher at Memorial High School.

## What is your average day like working at Memorial High School? How do you use your CJ degree with it?

I call myself a teacher because my focus really is on the students, but at the same time it is like running a small corporation. We have a lot of activities for students, each which require a lot of outside coordination and a lot of that has to do with communication. I communicate daily with parents, the general public, and then again at concerts and events. We do a lot of community outreach.

Coordinating with the public is a significant part of my job. Communication is the cornerstone of my job as a choir teacher.

## What led you back to the Chippewa Valley?

My time at UW-Eau Claire is one of the main reasons I came back. I participated in a lot of activities on campus where I had a great time. I was heavily involved in the Newman Parish on campus, and being involved in the community then and now are reasons I was drawn back. It is hard to top the beauty of Eau Claire, with the campus located right along the river and the city filled with such great people and exciting events.

***“Communication is the cornerstone of my job as a choir teacher.”***

Written By: Meredith Robertson  
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# Jolene Clark

## Class of 2001



**People Development and  
Performance Manager  
Molson Coors International  
Denver, CO**



DENVER – After graduating with a major in public relations and a minor in business marketing in 2001, Jolene Clark started her professional life in the Twin Cities working at Target as an executive team leader. She then worked for Deluxe Corporation in training and development, before working for United Health Group as a learning and development project manager. After getting promoted and working for some time as a management development consultant, she finally moved to Denver, Colorado to work with Molson Coors International.

### **What did you do immediately after graduating?**

Well, a big group of my best girlfriends and I had just moved back to the cities. So, the day our trucks unloaded our stuff from school, we decided to go camping in South Dakota for five days. We'd been studying for four years straight, and some of us already had jobs lined up, so we just packed up and left. When I got back, I spent an amazing month at my parents' house laying by the pool and getting a tan. Then I worked for my parents' best friend's company for a while, while living in a lovely little apartment in uptown with my best friend. A while later I got laid off. It was a very interesting time in my life, to say the least.

### **What are you currently doing professionally?**

I'm a manager of people development and performance. Essentially I do anything and everything within the people cycle: talent planning, succession planning, and annual review work. I evaluate where our current employees are at and where they could be in a few years, where our businesses are, and where we need them to be. I'm also pretty heavily involved in leadership development.

### **What's the most exciting part of your job?**

My job is like a free education. I've never worked in the beverage industry, and now I work with 522 people in 17 countries. I have to understand when these people are getting the information that I'm sharing with them, what else they're getting, whether or not things translate well,

and whether or not I'm helping them be successful. Just getting to work with so many people and take so many things into consideration really helps me stay excited about work.

### **How did UW-Eau Claire prepare you for the "real world?"**

The professors were progressive enough, to the point where we could have really open conversations in class with diverse people, with diverse backgrounds. I always felt like we could explore interesting conversations. Even more so, I still feel like Eau Claire has this incredible sense of community. We were encouraged to be independent and grow, but there was such a great support system to help you through it too.

### **What's the most important piece of advice you would give to a new UW-Eau Claire graduate trying to get into the communications industry?**

One of the best things I did early in my career was find myself in a job I was hugely unqualified for. It's so easy to go the direction everyone wants you to go, but if you know something in your gut, go for it. The most important piece of advice I can give is to always remember that every bad day will end, and every good day will end too. The

risks you take, the ones you feel in your gut are right. Go with those. Be comfortable with the uncomfortable, because absolutely nothing is guaranteed in this world.

### **What do you know now that you wish you knew in college?**

Don't take everything so seriously. That advice will stand the test of time. Work is your life for eight to ten hours a day, five days a week. Your body and mind will pay for that stress if you aren't able to step back from things and just live.

***"The most important piece of advice I can give is to always remember that every bad day will end, and every good day will end too."***

Written By: Hannah Severson  
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# Tracy Phillippi

## Class of 2007



**Event Sales Manager**  
**Wisconsin Brewing Company**  
**Verona, WI**

VERONA, Wis. – The journey after earning a degree from the communication and journalism department at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire does not always go how some envision. Some graduates find jobs right away, others search for their calling, while many finish without a clear dream job in mind. That was the case of Tracy Phillippi who graduated in December of 2007 with a major in mass communications and an emphasis in public relations. Today, Tracy is an event sales manager with Wisconsin Brewing Company in Verona where she plans events at the facility where she works.

### **What did you do right after graduating?**

When I graduated I actually went to get my master's right away. I went to school at York University in Toronto, Canada where I studied environmental studies and food and agricultural policy. While I was in Canada I became really involved in the local food community, but then I discovered the beer world. I've basically been working in breweries the last seven years; marketing, events, communications, that kind of thing.

### **Why did you choose a degree in public relations?**

When I was at UW-Eau Claire, I changed my major a few times but finally settled on mass communication because I figured when I finally found my passion or my calling, that it would be a really great background to have.

### **How did the CJ program prepare you for life after UW-Eau Claire?**

Oh gosh, that seems like so long ago. I can't really think back on the actual programming and the classes, but I thought that the faculty were really excellent and I thought that the students were also really excellent. Everybody was incredibly passionate and there were a lot of really excellent opportunities for networking and growing your career while you were there. So the friends that I made in the communication and journalism department are still some of my closest friends today.

### **What is some advice you would give someone who is looking to get into the communication field?**

I would say never underestimate the power of networking in today's world where we are so connected online. It's so easy to just follow someone on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. But face-to-face interactions are so powerful and really leave long-lasting impressions. So I would say keep putting yourself out there and keep meeting people. You never know when certain people you meet can lead to a future potential opportunity.

### **How tough was it for you to find a job right after you graduated?**

I worked on campus while I was getting my master's but my first job after I graduated was as an education and outreach coordinator with the non-profit organization I interned with. So I basically had a job lined up for me.

***“Everybody in the CJ department was incredibly passionate and there were a lot of really excellent opportunities for networking and growing your career while you were there.”***

### **What do you know now, that you wish you had known while you were in school?**

Looking back, I wish I would have taken more of the revenue that I made earlier on in my career and put it into a retirement account.

### **What has been the most exciting part of your journey?**

What's especially great about working in the craft beer industry is that I get to spend time with people when they are incredibly happy and when they are celebrating things. I basically help people have fun together with other people, and I really enjoy that. It's stressful in its own way but people really approach craft beer with a really light hearted, fun attitude.

Written By: Jake Steen  
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# Krista Skrtic

Class of 2005



Healthcare Technology  
Advisor  
Universal Hospital Services  
Bloomington, MN



BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – As many people know and can attest to, getting a job right out of college does not always come easy. Krista was fortunate enough to have a job lined up. After graduation she started working in retail management. She hoped she would someday do public relations for the company because she majored in public relations. After a while she realized that retail management was not for her and she got into sales while also doing a little bit of public relations for the company. Eventually Krista ended up in health care and at Universal Hospital Services in 2009, all because a friend asked her if she wanted to try something new. In her current position she is using more of her college education than she ever did since she graduated.

## **Briefly tell us about your current position.**

My current title is a Healthcare Technology Advisor, which in short means I am a medical equipment consultant. I work with current customers on capital planning, technology assessment, and other consulting projects.

## **What has been the most exciting or interesting part of your current career?**

I get to go to our customer sites and work with account executives in presenting their capital plans for the year. It is very exciting to go in and present my work to the high level executives at a facility.

Also, I love to learn about medical equipment. I think it is the coolest stuff ever and I really enjoy that I get to stay on the cutting edge of medical equipment.

## **How did the UW-Eau Claire program help prepare you for your career?**

First of all, the writing classes were very helpful. One thing I really appreciated was when Dr. Dorsher gave out a failing grade because a name was wrong or a fact was off in a press release. I do a lot of writing in my work and I am pretty vigilant with my proofreading. Also, when I am reading something and there is an error, it is an immediate

red flag and credibility is lost. This need for correctness I attribute to my writing class at UW-Eau Claire. Another thing I learned a lot about in school was public speaking. Also, the capstone class was a big help in regards to management positions I have held over the years. Lastly, I was a sociology minor and although I don't use these skills directly in my career I believed it has helped me see the world in a variety of different ways.

## **What are some primary skills you believe would help individuals stand out and find a job?**

Writing a good cover letter is critical. Make sure you do your homework on the company and make suggestions about how you can be beneficial and helpful to that particular company. Also, make sure your resume is professional and not too wordy.

## **What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

Learn how to use excel. In my opinion you should know this program inside and out. Having good presentation skills is another important skill that public relations professionals should have. Also, take everything off of Facebook the day you start applying for jobs. No matter what your age is, do not put certain pictures on your profile or at the very least make your account private. Lastly, a good resume is vital because it is the first real shot at a job so make sure to work hard on your resume.

***“Have an open mind and be ready to learn. Take direction, but be confident in your decision-making. Find a balance between being a good listener and being able to hold a conversation. Lastly, find a balance between confidence and humility.”***

## **Finally, what is the most important advice you can give someone wanting to go into your field?**

When you're in school take advantage of every opportunity you can on campus. Have an open mind and be ready to learn. Take direction, but be confident in your decision-making. Find a balance between being a good listener and being able to hold a conversation. Lastly, find a balance between confidence and humility.

Written by: Megan Strop  
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# Carrye Jo Cony

## Class of 2006



**Volunteer Services Coordinator**  
**The Salvation Army**  
**Sheboygan, WI**



SHEBOYGAN - Carrye Jo Cony has always had a passion for helping others, both personally and professionally. Originally from Pewaukee, a suburb of Milwaukee, she earned her bachelor's degree in mass communication in December 2006. Since then, Carrye has become the Volunteer Coordinator for The Salvation Army in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Carrye admits her job may not be the highest-paying one, but it is the one she is most passionate about.

### **What made you decide to attend UW-Eau Claire?**

I thought it was a decent amount of distance away from home and I wanted to stay within the UW System. Originally I was going to go to Madison but it was too big and too easy to get lost. I liked the fact that UW-Eau Claire was a smaller campus with more personalized care.

### **Was it difficult finding a job after graduation?**

I did not do the right thing, which is looking for a job your senior year. So when I graduated I had to move back in with my parents for a few months. I had worked at the Best Buy in Eau Claire so I transferred to the store where my parents lived and that was horribly embarrassing. I think I was only there for three months. People I knew would come through and ask, "Didn't you just graduate college?" and here I am with a degree working at the local Best Buy. Obviously that motivated me and I was able to land a good job not too long after.

### **Career-wise, what have you done after graduation?**

I went to work in communications and public relations for a for-profit company that managed non-profits, and I loved it. I was a communication and membership manager and I did a lot with press releases while traveling all over. I made really good money but worked really long hours. I found myself just absolutely exhausted at 25 years old.

The job was really fabulous but I was not fulfilled at the end of the day. Now I work for The Salvation Army and I make no money, but I love what I do. My job consists of recruiting volunteers, actively managing our social media, and anything in between. I really left all I knew and all the big bucks to come up here. People thought I was crazy but it has truly made a difference in my personal happiness. There is never a dull moment here and I know that I am helping somebody.

### **What is the best or most interesting part of your job?**

The most gratifying part is my positive interactions with community members as a result of articles or press releases that I write. It might result in a \$20,000 donation or a business donating a lot of socks for the homeless that year. So the grammar and proper PR stuff really do pay off. People do pay attention.

### **What advice would you give for a student who was thinking about going into your field?**

Find a cause you are passionate about and that you can focus on each day. My first job was with the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, which is a medical non-profit organization. So, I would write press releases and copy about

allergies and bee stings. After a while I just stopped caring because I was not passionate about bee stings. However, that might not be boring to someone who has a child with a severe allergy. So find something you are passionate about. I was not fulfilled until I found something that I truly cared about. Little did I know that mine would be for a Christian non-profit organization because I am the furthest from Christian, but we help a lot of people and I enjoy being able to do that on a daily basis.

***"I really left all I knew and all the big bucks to come up here. People thought I was crazy but it has truly made a difference in my personal happiness. There is never a dull moment here and I know that I am helping somebody."***

Written By: Chase Thielbar  
thielbcs@uwec.edu

# Nick Adams

## Class of 2007



**Professional Photographer**  
**Supreme Images Photography**  
**& Embracing You Boudoir**  
**Minneapolis, MN**



MINNEAPOLIS – Nick Adams is the definition of natural talent. Even though he has never technically taken a photography class, his photos have been published among top competition prints of the world, winning him six international awards. As the co-owner of Supreme Images Photography and Embracing You Boudoir Photography, Nick transforms memories into standout original displays of art. Now he's using his major in public relations to rebrand his clients.

### **What's been the most exciting part of your job?**

For the most part, I don't really feel like it's a job. Over the years I've been blessed to meet some incredible individuals. I have met celebrities, amazing brides, high school seniors, and families. Every client is special and unique to me and I make sure their photos show it. Every now and again, I get some "interesting" clients who do not understand what I do and we butt heads a little, but at the end of the day, it is my job to create amazing images.

***"I have met celebrities, amazing brides, high school seniors, and families. Every client is special and unique to me and I make sure their photos show it."***

### **In your opinion, what is the greatest advantage of a degree in the communications field?**

One of the factors of choosing a degree in communication was that everyone relies on communication in their lives. There are so many career paths that a person with a degree in communication can choose from. I couldn't go wrong. I still feel this way. Every company needs communications. It's up to the student to decide what aspects they want to focus on.

### **Can you describe that moment when you knew that photography was something you just had to do?**

I almost feel like photography was a fluke for me. I remember getting my first digital camera in high school and I'd go around shooting silly stuff and thinking, "this is kind of fun." But, at the time I was more into pencil

drawings. It wasn't until my best friend took a photography class and showed me some of his photos that I thought, "I could do that."

### **Has anyone had a major influence during your time at UW-Eau Claire?**

UW-Eau Claire was great to me because I had a number of professors who truly cared about their students. I do have to give special thanks to Bill Hoepner, the campus photographer, for taking the time to mentor me. He took the time out of his day to teach me things I wasn't learning in any class, and for that I truly appreciate him.

He challenged me to be a better photographer. Bill had a very direct, no excuse approach to teaching me.

### **What do you know now, you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

I strongly believe that with age does come wisdom. I wish I would have spent more time focusing on my education and

pursuing internships. At the end of the day, employers want more real life experiences. I think that's something that's pretty textbook in today's work force. Lots of times you need at least three years of experience to get an entry level job. How is that possible? Overall, I feel as if I didn't have the right experience to find a job in public relations or communications after graduating from college. Even though I don't currently work in PR, I love my job and I am extremely good at it.

Written by: Katie Thomas  
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# Renee Bonjour

## Class of 2006



**Director of Development and Marketing**  
**Group Health Cooperative**  
**Eau Claire, WI**



EAU CLAIRE – Reflecting back on her time at UW-Eau Claire, Renee fondly remembers her time with the communication and journalism department. Renee graduated from UW-Eau Claire in the winter of 2006 with a major in mass communication with an emphasis in public relations, and a minor in web design and development. She now works at Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire as the director of development and marketing. Renee oversees the marketing department where she ensures all messaging going out from the organization maintains a consistent voice. Although she never imagined a career in healthcare, she loves where it has taken her.

### **How did the communication and journalism program at UW-Eau Claire prepare you for your career?**

It is a very well-rounded program and it's great that you get to do a little bit of everything from both the journalism side to the public relations side. With the role that I am in now, it has been both important and beneficial to understand the marketing side as well. Understanding those broad concepts across a variety of general communication fields has really helped me out in my career.

### **What is the most exciting part of your job?**

The opportunity to grow has been really exciting. I have moved up pretty quickly and that was an exciting time. I had to take leaps of faith when taking on things that I didn't know I could do, but I knew I had to give it a chance. You are not always going to go into something feeling 100 percent comfortable and confident, but you have to have humility and the willingness to admit to people that you are not sure. People appreciate honesty and humility more than pretending you know how to do everything. Always maintain a level of humility and be okay with not knowing everything but take that chance to learn something new.

### **How do you balance your work and your personal life?**

A big part of my role is being out in the community after hours working, so this can sometimes be challenging. Balancing for me is having a busy week every now and then and then laying low for a week. I make sure to set guidelines for myself for how much time I will contribute after hours. Finding that balance is important because it's about advancing your career but it's also about being able to have a life outside of work too.

### **What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you were in school?**

I wish I would've known to take more numbers based classes. With general communication many people don't care to deal with the numbers side of things, but there are definitely classes I wish I would have taken in things like math or finance. I now learn as I go within my job, but I wish I would have had a better understanding going into it. I wish I would have taken a

few more classes outside of my comfort zone. I think it's important to try some things that scare you because in the end you'll come out a better person.

### **What is the most important advice you can give to someone wanting to go into your field?**

Don't ever look at something and automatically assume that it can't benefit you. Even if it seems like something you aren't terribly interested in, it can still be beneficial to you in the future. This is something I wish I would've known when I was in school. Take some of those classes you might not be thrilled about. Realize career wise that it ultimately is going to benefit you even if at the moment it doesn't seem like the most fun in the world. Have the mindset that it could be beneficial in the future. Never cross out anything as a potential opportunity.

### **UW-Eau Claire is all about the power of AND. What would you say is your power of AND?**

My power of AND is the skills I have AND the ability or willingness to always learn something new. There is always an opportunity for growth, so never turn that down.

***“Don't ever look at something and automatically assume that it can't benefit you.”***



**Thanks for  
Reading**

