

Beyond the Bubble

a look at life outside Illinois Wesleyan University

How did you find out about your internship?

I heard about this job from my father, who also works for the Smithsonian. He forwarded me an email to which I responded with a transcript and a resume. Needless to say, I got the job.

What did you do there?

I was a Gallery Attendant. I worked in collaboration with the OPS (Office of Protection Services) and had to attend formation every morning. Formation is the daily meeting where the sergeants assign the posts and relay any special instructions for the day. Throughout the course of a day I would patrol my area, answer questions, and make sure that everything was okay. In the Wright Brothers exhibit, people would usually ask me if the plane was real, to which I would answer "Yes." Then they would get an excited look on their faces and take lots of pictures. The most unruly visitors were the middle school girls. They would walk around in packs and

INTERN PROFILE

Max Briggs '12

Major: Music Performance

- Tuba

Smithsonian Institution

(Washington, D.C.)

try to sneak drinks into the museum from the restaurant, which is attached.

What did you learn through your experience?

I learned a lot about the principals of flight and a lot about planets. I also noticed many things about people in general. I came to expect certain behavior from certain groups of people. For instance, international visitors would move very quickly through the museum, taking lots of pictures because they were probably on a tour of the entire city and only had one day to see everything.

Did it help you at all with your future plans?

This really gave me experience in supervising large groups of people in which I was responsible for all of them. I remember specifically this one time where I had to talk with a dad who was angry that I had told his son to stop climbing on the exhibits. So through times like that, I learned how to handle frustrating situations with complete strangers I was in charge of.

Who would you recommend this internship to?

I would recommend this job to



Max Briggs (far left) with fellow Smithsonian employees and writer/artist Michael Benson, next to a print from Benson's book

anybody who has family in the D.C. area and is interested in museums. My dad lives near D.C. so I was living for free. Also, for this job, you need a very comfortable pair of shoes, as you will be on your feet all day.

What was your favorite part about working at the Smithsonian?

My favorite part about working at the Smithsonian was the people. My co-workers were some of the most interesting people I have ever experienced. My fellow Gallery Attendants and I ruled the second floor and had hilarious conversations with the IMAX employees and the education program people. Also, it is a great experience to see 10,000 people a day come through the doors and to be responsible for every one of them.

Career Connections

a newsletter from the hart career center

November 2010

Finding Your Dream Career in Music

For most of my life, I have been a shameless band geek. I started playing saxophone when I was 11, and to this day, you can see me in the stands at a football or basketball game with my trusty Ramses (that's my saxophone's name... yes, I named it) around my neck as I yell at the opposing team. Every two to three days, I reminisce with a wistful look in my eyes about being a drum major in one of the most disorganized marching bands to ever grace the fields of Illinois football stadiums. Every two to three minutes, I make terrible band-related jokes to those who aren't in music at all. Did you honestly expect any less of me?

But despite my love for music, I went on to pursue a degree in political science. Nay, I was neither brave nor bold enough to pursue a degree that few have the courage to face. To my music major friends, I salute you. May this article help you realize that a life in a cardboard box does not await you.

As I hinted at, many music students look at their degree with the mentality that finding a job will be difficult, if not impossible, after they graduate. With the economic recession not quite on the turn yet, it is easy to understand this apprehension. However, after speaking with Angela Beeching, the Career Services director of the New England Conservatory, any music major's fears can easily be put to rest.

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Beeching's book, *Beyond Talent: Creating a Successful Career in Music* has become the instruction manual for many music majors about to jump into the professional world. After listing a few disconcerting statistics (see the chart on page two), she says, "While all this may seem dire, the situation allows for divergent thinking. There may be something positive to be had from the situation. Yes, it means that musicians—those creative, imaginative folk—need to think beyond the traditional jobs."

According to Beeching, there are many skills any employer wants out of their employees that music students easily adopt through their day-to-day music training, including interpersonal skills, self-discipline, problem-solving skills, leadership, and analytical thinking.

"If you think more broadly about what being 'a musician' means, you'll find the right niches for your career," she said. "It's not always just playing an instrument or teaching. But if you have this superstar fixation where you want to be a famous soloist or concert violinist, then you're in for the long haul."

Director of IWU's School of Music, Dr. Mario Pelusi also echoed that notion.

"[Many music majors] see how competitive the field is, but they're looking at very famous people who have public notoriety and not seeing all the countless other musicians who are making a living, even though they don't have that fame," he said. "Our goal is to focus on the education that music majors will need in order to be successful—to whatever level they aspire."

So if music majors don't have their names up in lights, then what are they



doing? Beeching illustrated the process every music major faces after they graduate.

"Most performance majors do a range of things, and that's all part of the process in finding their niche," she said. "They start going to various auditions, teaching lessons in their own studio, and focusing on their own entrepreneurial projects, such as starting their own ensemble or instrument repair shop. It's very normal for musicians to have this kind of multi-strand career. Eventually, one opportunity leads to another or you figure out what projects or type of work you are best suited for and challenged by, and you go in that direction."

As for music students specifically from IWU, Dr. Pelusi was very proud of the success they tend to find. "For our music education students, we have a record of 100 percent job placement after IWU," he said. "That's really impressive, given the current economy. So if our music education majors do well and persevere, they will find jobs. Most of our performance majors go on to graduate school. It's very difficult for them to compete with everyone else otherwise. Our composition majors also usually go on to graduate schools. Many of them become film composers or professors, once they get their doctorate. Without a doctoral degree, it is not possible to

Number of music students enrolled in U.S. music programs	over 110,000
Number of music students who graduate every year	over 20,000
Number of positions in ICSOM orchestras that pay full-time wage	4,200
Number of openings in ICSOM orchestras in 2003	159
Number of applicants per orchestra opening	between 100 and 200
Information courtesy of Angela Beeching	

sustain a career at the collegiate level.”

But with the horrors of student loans and grad school costs being spoken of near the doors of every practice room, many music students wonder if the benefits outweigh the costs.

Beeching said, “A Bachelor’s degree used to be plenty, but these days, getting a Master’s is more or less assumed. If you don’t go on to grad school, you need to have your act together even more with just your undergrad.”

But many students in general are un-

certain how to prepare for the ambiguous, much-referred to “real world.” To answer that question, both Beeching and Pelusi emphasized one thing above all else: experience.

Pelusi said, “Look for internships, start networking with professionals, enter competitions, and start refining audition skills. Even when

you’re successful, you’re auditioning continually. If you’re a music education major, get as much teaching experience as you can. Also, start using social media for promotional purposes. Learn how to market yourself.”

Beeching said, “[Music majors] need to visit the Career Center and connect with alums who can help them figure out what they want to do from here. The second thing they can do is invest time each week in researching their future career. You can make a to-do list of things like setting up an informational interview

with someone to talk about career plans. People who have the hardest time making this transition are those who haven’t done any internships or student teaching or gigs before graduating.”

But even with all the to-do lists and experience, Beeching talked about the one thing music majors need to know before they make music a career.

“They need to know that they really love music,” she said. “I also think it’s important that they have a sense of themselves. How do they want to connect music with other people? Is there a market for their music? I think performers often become so concerned with how well they’re playing that they forget about the audience. It becomes more of a competition than anything. They need to ask themselves if this is about them or if it’s about sharing their music with others. How do they want to contribute? There is a need for music out there, and they need to think about the practical side of how they might meet these needs before they start their careers.”

A Career in Helping Students Achieve Their Dreams

Working in the Career Center is pretty fantastic, if I do say so myself. Not only do I get an opportunity to let all of IWU know random, ridiculous facts about myself and to assert how much of a nerd I am, every single day, but I get to work with some really cool people. Every day, I ask myself how one can attain the awesomeness my supervisors exhibit. Is it truly possible to become that amazing while helping college students get their lives on track? After searching far and wide, I spoke with a few alumni who gave me the answers I desired. Maybe you, too, will pursue a career in higher education administration and reach the level of awesome my supervisors have attained. (Warren, can I have tomorrow off, now? No? Okay...)

After graduating from IWU in 2001, Josh Butts used his previous experience in public relations to land a fundraising job with the University of Chicago. This job proved to be just the thing to jumpstart a career that would take him across the U.S.

“U of C was hiring fundraisers for their \$2 billion campaign, and they were looking for people with marketing or public relations experience,” Butts said. “So

basically, they wanted to know you were a good writer. I worked with them for about four or five years and then got my Master’s in higher education administration from Harvard.”

From that point, he began working with Tufts University’s Dean of Arts and Sciences’ Office before returning to Harvard to work with its medical school as Director of Development for Principal and Major Gifts. There, he continues to use his experience at U of C to raise money to fund Harvard Medical School’s health care policy program.

“I’m constantly around very smart people who are helping to raise money for a very honorable thing,” he said. “I mean, the goal of the medical school is to help find cures for diseases, after all.”

After graduating in 2009, IWU music major, Dan George went on to work as an admissions counselor at Denison University in Ohio. Through that, he found that his liberal arts degree could be utilized in a wide variety of ways.

“I traveled to high schools in Indiana, Wisconsin, and central Ohio, giving presentations about Denison and acting as a resource for high school students,” George said. “I was responsible for

coordinating some scholarships with other divisions on the campus, interviewing students on and off the campus for admission, and I also had some internal responsibilities.”

George’s experience as an admissions counselor went far beyond his work at Denison. His time there ended up pointing him in the right direction for new opportunities.

“I found that I derive fulfillment from helping others to reach their potential and achieve goals,” he said. “It made me very happy to be in a people-centered profession. That aspect of my work in this job will define my eventual career direction.”

Recently, many people like these two have gone on to work in universities after receiving their undergrad for many reasons.

“Even though it’s typically viewed as a non-profit career, you still get a lot of good resources out of it,” Butts said. “You’re also not working for pennies and trying to find ways to feed yourself or anything like that. It’s also a very diverse field. There are a wide variety of not only different jobs but also different types of universities you can work at. So there are

Continued from page 2

a lot of different ways you can move with this career.”

The possibilities with higher education administration are almost limitless. Where there is a job to be done, someone needs to be there to do it.

“There is a lot you can do,” Butts said. “Some people go into human resources, but if you’re more business-minded, you can always work in the Dean of Administration’s office, managing finances, or

in admissions. If you really think about it, it’s kind of like a small city. There are plenty of jobs to be done.”

For George, there were opportunities for him to connect with the school outside of his daily tasks in the office.

“I loved how, even as a professional, I could get involved in the campus and student life,” he said. “This also allowed me to better understand the institution I represented. I was able to perform with the Denison Jazz Ensemble and meet

many fine students and faculty in the music department. I was very fortunate to be able to use my own music background from IWU.”

Many graduate schools are offering degrees for students who do not want their contribution to a college community to stop after classes end. If this sounds like the career path for you, one of our staff members would be happy to talk with you about where to go after graduation.

What to Know Before You Go to Law School

One of my favorite shows was *The Practice*. You may know its not-as-good spin-off, *Boston Legal*. (Fight me on that. I dare you.) Before *The Practice* went off the air, I would watch it every week with my family. I was so drawn into the dramatic cases, the quick-thinking lawyers, and the clever quips my favorite character, Alan would make to his co-workers who dared question his unorthodox ways. But soon after I decided that I would be making six figures as a lawyer some day, I realized that there was more to being a lawyer than what I had thought. While it is undoubtedly a fantastic job, the glamour most people come to expect after watching hours of *Boston Legal* is not always there right away.

I had the opportunity to talk to two IWU alumni who shed further light on the realities of law school. Anna Konradi, who graduated from IWU in 2009, is currently a law student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For her, the uncertain economic climate is one of those realities.

“Firms’ cost-conscious clients are now hesitant to pay for law student and new associate work, and in response, firms have cut their summer programs and first-year hiring dramatically,” she said. “I think it’s important for students to temper their expectations about high-paying post-graduate employment. In some respects, this may be a good thing. People who really want to study and practice law will continue coming to law school.”

Chris Seps, a 2007 graduate from IWU, has already stepped out into the post-graduate world as a lawyer for Locke Lord Bissell and Liddell in Chicago. From his first-hand experience, he was able to illustrate what that world looks like.

“Most law students start at jobs earning

less than \$75,000 a year but still working over 60 hours a week with six figures worth of student loans to pay off,” he said. “It’s harsh, but it’s reality. Only the lucky 30 percent of graduates start earning over \$100,000 right out of school, and each year of law school costs an average of \$30,000, even at public schools.”

As Seps echoed, many students are becoming increasingly hesitant to go to graduate school because of student loans.

“Debt is a real concern for most law students, and the decision to take out government loans should not be made lightly,” Konradi said. “The adage goes, ‘Live like a lawyer when you’re a student, and you could end up living like a student when you’re a lawyer.’ Because I came straight through, my standard of living in grad school is similar to the one I had during college.”

“I attended the highest ranked school that accepted me and worked my tail off so that I landed a job at a big firm paying big bucks,” Seps said. “I could have attended a lower ranked law school that offered me a scholarship, but law firms only look at two things when hiring: the rank of the school and your grades. Go to the best school you can and work hard, and you’ll set yourself up for a job that will allow you to pay off your loans in two or three years.”

There also exists the issue of going to law school right after graduation or waiting for a couple of years.

Konradi said, “You should not come straight through if you’re not absolutely positive that you want to be an attorney or prepared to jump into a very challenging academic environment right after graduation. Some [students] spend a year working as a clerk in a law office to find out if being a lawyer is something that they want to do. That being said, students who are still in school tend to

do better on their LSATs than those who have been out for a few years.”

Seps said, “The best time to go to law school is two or three years after college. Going to law school requires a huge commitment of time and money. Waiting for a few years gives you a chance to gain some experience that will be invaluable when studying and practicing law.”

If you’re still on the fence about whether to make that giant leap into law school, both of our alums had wise words to consider before you make that decision.

“Do some serious research before making the decision to attend law school,” Konradi said. “There’s a lot more to the practice of law than the high profile constitutional law cases. Use the Career Center to set up an internship with a local law firm and talk to current law students and attorneys about their experiences. Also, be realistic when you choose a law school. Some schools provide students with access to specific public-sector markets, whereas others have more national reaches for positions in large private firms. That doesn’t mean that some schools are ‘bad,’ but it does necessitate that students do their research before signing up for a program that won’t ultimately be able to place them in the kind of job they had hoped for.”

“Law school is a gamble,” Seps said. “If you attend a top-50 law school and work your way into the top 30 percent of the class, you’ll be well-positioned to get a nicely-paying job. For everyone else, you will struggle to find a job, and when you do, you won’t be making any more money than your non-law school friends. If you’re doing it because you think you have no other options with your political science degree or you’re using it as a way to springboard yourself into a six-figure salary, you are going to be disappointed.”