Getting a Foot in the Door

By Anna Hoffmann

Internships are not a required part of the Communication Studies Department curriculum, but they are, by consensus, a requirement for a successful life after college.

Consider these facts: Seventy percent of jobs people get after college are through people they already know. Internships help create valuable networking connections. The top three things employers look for are related experience, the ability to communicate, and work ethic.

Internships provide students with all three. Many companies that deal with the media industry will not hire someone unless he or she has had real world experience. Once again, an internship meets that prerequisite. Thus, despite the fact that an internship is not a graduation requirement, a lack of internship experience can become an obstacle to future goals.

Shena Lee, a 2010 Communication Studies graduate, interned at Make-a-Wish of Central New York and at DIRT Motor Sports. She secured the DIRT internship through a Niagara University graduate that she contacted and simply emailed Make-a-Wish to ask if the organization had openings.

“Internships are a good idea,” Lee said. “They give you the real world experience you need before a real world job.

“It gives you an extra step ahead of people, and you have the experience of working with a major company,” she continued.

There are a few conditions for internships at NU. The first is that students have to have completed their sophomore academic year before doing an internship for academic credit, although there have been exceptions.

Second, a three-credit internship is the equivalent of 150 hours of work. This means they take up about 10 hours per week (as compared to the average three for academic courses), so some students choose to complete them during the summer. Doing an internship during the summer also enables students to travel to other cities or to do internships near their hometowns so they can commute.

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Internship Tips for Students

Use the resources on campus
Office of Cooperative Education in the basement of Seton Hall
Meet with your adviser about internships.
Research one of the internships that get sent out in emails
Find an organization you would like to work at and write an internship-for-credit proposal to the Communication Studies Department
Go to niagara.edu/jobs and type “Communications” into the career field space to see the beginnings of a database that will eventually list all Communications internships
Ask other students about the internships they’ve done
Take the initiative! Contact or apply to the agency, and follow up on the internship.
Students also frequently participate in internships during fall and spring semesters for local organizations that range from WGRZ Channel 2 News in Buffalo to the Niagara Falls chapter of the American Red Cross. If students lack their own transportation, there are also internship opportunities on campus with the athletics, public relations, or alumni relations departments.

There are plenty of ways and places to get experience at a media organization and to augment a resume with actual work experience. An internship is not to be undervalued.

Dr. Mark Barner, the Chair of the Communication Studies Department, has a few words of advice: “Do an internship! Get as much career related experience as you can while you’re still in school, whether it’s doing an internship for credit, volunteering at a media organization, or doing a media related extracurricular like WNIA Radio or The Index.”

“It’s never too late to try and arrange an internship...” said Bob Swanson, coordinator of NU’s Cooperative Education. Your sophomore year is ideal to start planning.”

Swanson also said the Office of Career Development has events that help students learn about what employers and recruiters are looking for.

This issue of the CMS Review is highly centered on internships and their importance in enabling students to succeed. Understanding the benefits of field experience, I have taken the editor position of this snazzy newsletter.

I am currently a sophomore English major with minors in Communication Studies and Philosophy. I also have a strong interest in art and graphic design (mainly print advertising and web design). I hope to someday be an acquisitions editor for a publishing house—reading manuscripts and choosing the next book for publishing. Reading is really a passion of mine and something that I intend on making into a career.

When I’m not in class, I’m usually reading for class, working in the College of Education, volunteering, or drawing intense crayon murals on my dorm room walls.

- Emily Kaufman, ’13

For more information about NU’s Communication Studies Department, visit our Facebook group [Niagara University Department of Communication Studies] for event announcements and updates on our active students!
Niagara University and Rochester Institute of Technology recently signed an agreement regarding NU students attending RIT’s graduate school.

As of August 2009, an agreement was made that enables qualified graduating NU students a preferred admission status for entrance into the Master of Science degree program in Communication and Media Technologies (CMT) at RIT.

The Master of Science in CMT at RIT is an interdisciplinary advanced study program that combines Liberal Arts courses in communication with coursework in an applied technological program.

"After seeing the quality of the (Niagara University) student research at the Conference for Undergraduate Research in Communication, we thought it would be a good idea to streamline the admissions process for Niagara students by offering an automatic acceptance for students who graduate with a GPA of 3.25 or higher and waive the admission fee," said Dr. Rudy Pugliese, Graduate Coordinator of CMT at RIT.

"So far we have two Niagara students in the program that entered (in 2009)," Pugliese said.

Communication Studies graduate Chrissy Foster entered the program this September and is researching professional athletes’ use of Twitter.

Although the workload is challenging – she is taking an overload of classes this quarter so she can focus solely on her thesis later on – Foster said she and the other graduate students lean on each other for support.

Unlike most Masters level programs, RIT integrates the social sciences and humanities with applied technologies along with other applied courses specializing in digital publishing, e-business marketing, information technology, public policy and health systems administrations.

Graduates will then be skilled at analysis of communication problems, the development of solutions and the creation of messages.

“The greatest strength of the proposed program is its integration of the social sciences, humanities and applied technologies,” said Steve Jones, Editor of New Media & Society, in a press release. “The integrated, interdisciplinary knowledge that students will gain will help them not only embark on careers but will also help them understand the current, quite rapid, social transformations being wrought by technology generally and by communication specifically...”

Gigina Giorgi, an NU alum and 2010 graduate of the RIT program, said that a student can finish within one year if they take more than the usual amount of classes in one semester.

“I got lucky and was able to overload on classes,” she said.

“Since the economy is so bad and finding a job right out of school is tough I would recommend going to graduate school right out of college. Just get your Masters and once the job market picks up, you will be that much more qualified,” Giorgi continued.

The 2010 Conference for Undergraduate Research in Communication was held April 14 at RIT. Seven NU seniors presented research posters on topics ranging from media’s portrayal of body image to sports blogging.

Liberal Arts major Colleen Landry and Communication Studies major Jessica Garfinkel took home awards for their work.

The Communication Studies Department will again take select students to the conference this spring. A date has not yet been determined.

From left, May 2010 Graduates Kadie Gaiser, Savannah Hauck, Jessica Garfinkel, Colline Landry, Chrissy Foster, Erin Mirando and Brittany Schottmiller.
The Communication Studies Department and Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society sponsored the sixth annual Media Awareness Day during the Spring 2010 semester.

The events throughout the day aimed to show the importance of media and included presentations by Dr. Nina Huntemann, a video games scholar from Suffolk University in Boston.

Before Huntemann’s evening keynote speech, projects were displayed by students in Media Literacy classes taught by Dr. Kalen Churcher and Dr. Doug Tewksbury. The theme of the posters varied, but all were quite captivating in their messages.

“It was definitely hard not to notice (the posters) when you were walking by, but that is the point, so that we can get our message across to everyone,” said now-junior Karin Freyer.

Freyer’s poster theme was “Facebook Effects on Communication Skills,” a topic that has been the subject of much debate in recent years.

Although the posters had various themes and topics, the general portrayal was their critique of media today and how it influences society.

Prior to the lecture, Dr. Mark Barner, chair of the Communication Studies Department, showed a series of public service announcements produced by Niagara University students, as well as local high school students. The videos centered on various topics and were meant to inform the public in an advertisement-like style.

First and second place honors were awarded in the college and high school categories. Winners from Royalton-Hartland High School were Thomas and Jason Bragg. Niagara University winners were Raymond Potter and Franklin Moore.

As the featured speaker of Media Awareness Day, Dr. Huntemann spoke to a packed auditorium of media conscious students. As an associate professor of media studies, Huntemann’s research focuses on new media technologies, specifically video games and their impact. Her research also incorporates critical cultural studies as well as political economy perspectives.

Huntemann is known for her production of the educational film “Game Over: Gender, Race and Violence in Video Games.” She has also recently worked with Thomas Payne in co-editing the anthology “Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games.”

Her lecture addressed the influence of the military in the creation and distribution of video games. The presentation was analyzed in five categories: semiotics, language of war and play, military-entertainment complex, ideology and strategic culture.

“They [video games] make some people more aggressive but it would be wrong to assume they affect everyone. They contribute to a society that is already comfortable with violence,” Huntemann said.

The lecture gave new insight to not only video games and their content (in terms of the military) but also to movies. Movies are just as actively employed as an agent of the Pentagon. According to Huntemann, directors and military officials work together to produce the most accurate films as possible.

Some students were visibly surprised by the information presented.

“I never knew that the military affected video games so much. This definitely made me think,” said junior Raymond Potter.

Earlier in the day, Huntemann spoke to students in Tewksbury’s Media Literacy class, as well as Niagara Falls High School students. That lecture focused on race and gender in video games.

“I definitely learned a lot from her presentation, and I thought that her perspective on video games was really interesting,” said Timothy Carter, a minor in Communications.
Media Literacy (noun): refers to having the knowledge necessary to properly interpret and understand the media messages we come in contact with every day.

Left: Dr. Mark Barner, chair of the Communication Studies Department, welcomes attendees to the annual Media Awareness Day.

Below: Students pause to read some Media Awareness Day posters.

Above: Raymond Potter, Franklin Moore, and Dr. Mark Barner pose for a photo. Potter and Moore took 1st place among Niagara University Students for their Public Service Announcement.

Julie Fonzi ‘13

Jeannine Alsous ‘13

Jeannine displays her poster depicting Arab and African American Stereotypes.

Julie exhibits her poster portraying violence against women and female stereotypes.
Feature: CMS

Emily Bragg

Courtney Davies

Meghan Smith

Andrea Peeck
Students in Joel Brenden’s Photography class snap photos of everyday objects.

photography (ˈfoʊ.təɡrə.fɪ)  
Noun  
The art or process of producing images of objects upon a photosensitive surface (as film in a camera) by the chemical action of light or other radiant energy.
Geoff of All Trades

By Anna Hoffmann

Geoff Redick, a 21-year-old senior, is a well-known Niagara student. Aside from his academic pursuits as a Communication Studies major, Redick has a passion for acting, manages NU’s WNIA radio station, produces his own daily radio show that airs in Batavia, and still finds time to volunteer at the Niagara Falls Junior Football Club.

It takes a lot to balance his schedule, but Redick was more than willing to take time to explain how he does it.

“There are two keys,” Redick said, “being organized, and realizing that there will be other times to sleep.”

Redick carries around a seven-day planner that contains his carefully mapped out schedule. His Spring semester was especially hectic. In addition to producing his radio show for two hours every day Monday through Friday, Redick was a lead in the spring musical Anything Goes. He also was busy finishing up final projects and papers for his normal academic courses and work study in the IT department.

Redick originally wanted to go to school for a degree in graphic design, but decided to go with Communication Studies because of his ultimate goal of being on television. He has taken advantage of an array of activities and internships that NU has to offer in order to start building a resume that will hopefully put him ahead of his competitors in the industry.

“I guess there’s an expectation that it’s going to pay off to have done a lot of things while I’m younger,” he said.

This isn’t to say that he doesn’t enjoy what he’s doing. Redick has had a passion (and talent) for singing and theater since he was a sophomore in high school. He is thankful that the NU theater department allows non-theater majors to audition for productions, because it enables him to keep developing his skills as an actor.

Redick also announces and does public relations for the football club because he used to play in high school and wants to stay connected to the sport even though he doesn’t have the time to actually join a team.

Redick’s natural radio voice got him involved as news director of WNIA a few years ago and as general manager last year. He said that despite the challenge of trying to coordinate the club, it has been a rewarding experience.

“You have an image in your mind of how you want things to go, but it takes a while to learn that people make mistakes and that you make mistakes,” he said. “I had to get used to the back and forth process.”

After WNIA was brought to Lower Level Gallagher Center, Redick used his position as the student leader to make WNIA more connectable and visible on campus through events and promotion.

He believes that if people start to recognize WNIA and know that anyone can get involved, even just for fun, then it has a good chance of developing as a club.

Fellow staff member Kristen McAuley commended his leadership ability.

“[Redick] goes out of his way to help everybody,” McAuley said. “He’s good at organizing people, and if you need anything he’s there to help right away.”

Interested in writing for the CMS Review?
Contact
Dr. Kalen Churcher at
kchurcher@niagara.edu
or stop by her office in 334 Dunleavy Hall.
Recent Awards

GEOFF REDICK has been honored by the New York State Broadcasters Association for "Outstanding Radio News Feature Story" in a state-wide competition. Geoff is a Producer/Anchor of WBTA News in Batavia, NY.

His winning entry, entitled, "The Perfect Pour," showcases O'Lacy's Irish Pub in Batavia. Geoff discusses the pub's recognition by Guinness Beer as the best pour of the product in the northeastern U.S. and one of the best in the nation.

Redick's involvement on campus and his work for the radio station in Batavia does not stop him from excelling in academics as well. As a member of the National Communication Studies Honor Society, Lambda Pi Eta, Redick works hard to maintain a high GPA.

He greatly enjoys his Communication Studies classes, and mentioned Media Investigation and Art and History of Film as two of his favorites.

Redick's relaxed and upbeat attitude has helped him gain good rapport with his professors as well, who speak highly of his academic success in the classroom and involvement in activities outside of it.

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Asked what he does if he ever gets overwhelmed, Redick simply grinned.

“When I get to that point, I just go to sleep and figure out a way to do it tomorrow.”

Lambda Pi Eta

CMS majors and minors are inducted into the Omicron Iota chapter of Lambda Pi Eta, the National Communication Association honor society at Niagara University during the spring, 2010 semester.

Current and 2010 graduate members of Lambda Pi Eta include: Justin Hutchings, Kara Oliver, Rianne Farrugia, Ashley Shufelt, Kaitlyn Trotter, Erin Miranda, Anna Hoffmann, Mary Katherine Phelps, Amy Harvey, Lela Mayfield, Cathryn Mason, Amanda DeFisher, Alexandra Cortese, Vincent Brunetto, Heather Backlas, Shawna Cordon, Katherine Gibbs, Julie Gebhard, Kristen McAuley, Emily Brillanti, Kristen Sito, Brittany Scott-miller, Amanda Ryan, Shena Lee, Katie Longo, Frances McPhail, Emily Bragg, Chrissy Foster, Jessica Garfinkel, Steven Gruhalla, and Bobbi Nelson.
Two of Chrissy Foster’s favorite things are media and writing. Add hockey into the picture, and the May 2010 graduate couldn’t be happier.

Foster, a Communication Studies major and Writing minor, decided to combine her passions in the hopes of someday getting a job in the field of sports media. During her four years at Niagara University, Foster, who also enjoys reading, philosophy, Pilates and ballet – she was a soloist with the Greater Niagara Ballet Company – completed two NHL internships in addition to working with the university’s sports department.

“Internships are essential because they are necessary in order to get a career today,” said Brian Murphy, as associate professor of communication studies. “No internship means no job(s).”

Throughout college, many students come to find that internships play a key role to helping obtain a job. Internships not only assist students to give them ideas of what a career is like, but they also create an unforgettable experience that make these individuals more intellectual and stronger.

Foster’s first internship with the Buffalo Sabres in October 2008, was one that many college students dream of. Her job title was a Web site content coordinator. After a successful time with the hockey team, she decided to try for another internship, this time with an even more widely known team than the Sabres.

While in New York City during summer 2009, she attended a career fair at Madison Square Garden where she was invited to work as the media intern and IslandersTV host for the New York Islanders Club.

Every weekday, Foster was in the office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but on the home game days, she worked from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. When she was in the office, she handled e-mails from local media and scouts, as well as organized press passes, parking and press box seating. She also had to keep records of each newspaper and online articles, and record each time the Islanders were mentioned on TV.

Foster also made daily electronic newsletters, wrote press releases and feature stories, and controlled the team’s Blog Box, which credentialed select bloggers for games. One of the most rewarding jobs she had while in the internship was writing her own scripts and hosting the IslandersTV shows. Sometimes she would pull players to interview them and deliver statistics to NHL representatives and coaches.

One of the most important aspects in internships is learning. Foster said she learned so many new things that go beyond the classroom. She discovered what the ins-and-outs of managing media were for a professional sports team. One of the greatest experiences was working in a business setting while interacting with general managers, coaches, players.

“Chrissy is a great example of maximizing your time at NU,” said Dr. Kalen Churcher, an assistant professor in the Communication Studies Department. “She has interned at several places, and probably has achieved as much ‘real world’ experience as someone who has been working in the field for a year or so. She will definitely be an asset to some organization or company one day.”

Above: Chrissy Foster poses with fellow media intern, Nicole Kingston, as her brother, Michael, watches.
Left: Foster stands with Seth Sylvan, Communications Director for the Islanders
Advice for NU Freshmen
By Kristen McAuley

Being a freshman can be overwhelming, scary, and exciting all at the same time. You are a new member of the prestigious collegiate society, thrown into the mix of classes, new people to meet and new freedoms. You are opening a door to a new world of possibility here at Niagara all the while adjusting to a new life. Welcome to college!

As a senior here at Niagara University, I’ve had the chance to learn the ins and outs of college life. I’m taking this column to offer five key points of advice from my own experience.

1. GET INVOLVED. I cannot stress this enough. There are countless clubs and organizations on campus ranging from student government (NUSGA) to club soccer to the radio station (WNIA). Not only will joining a club help you to meet new people, but it can also be a great resume booster. The well rounded-individual will always look better on paper than someone who was not involved in campus life. Get the experience now while you have the time and you will be more prepared for post-graduate job searching or graduate school.

2. Get to know your professors. Because Niagara is a smaller school, the class sizes are also small. This gives you the opportunity to get to know the professors in the CMS department on a more personal level than you would find at a larger university. The professors are all incredibly knowledgeable and willing to help you through all of your years at NU.

Make friends with your classmates in the CMS department, too. You will be with them for the next four years and they will be going through many of the same classes that you will! These friends will be valuable study partners and will provide you with an essential support network.

3. Make the best of your dorm room or other living situation. If you have major problems, talk to your RA. Otherwise, try to sit down and have a talk with your roommates about compromising. You are here for academics first off, but getting along with people is another great skill to learn. As a Communication Studies major, you will most likely be encountering all kinds of people in your career, so take this time to learn patience and acceptance towards others.

4. Go to campus events! There are concerts, entertainment, and pretty much always free food at each event! Take advantage of what the Kiernan Center has to offer. There are free aerobics classes and intramural sports to help keep of the “freshman 15”! The Live Music series is another fun event that is held Under the Taps in Lower Level Gallagher. Check out www.niagara.edu/live-music-series for a listing of performing artists.

5. Utilize the programs (and people) here to help you! If you find that you are struggling in a class, don’t wait; get help immediately. There are great people in the Writing Center (located on the first floor of Seton Hall) who can help you. It is easier to rectify a problem early-on than to wait until it is too late and you are behind in your classes.

Ask your professors if something is unclear and don’t be afraid to ask a question. Odds are that someone else has that same question.

Best of luck, and be sure to enjoy your freshman year! - Kristen

Kristen McAuley is the student assistant for the 2010 Niagara University freshmen NUS course for Communication Studies.

WNIA “LEWISTON ROCKDOWN” CONCERT & BOWLING
7:30 to 10:30 p.m.
OCTOBER 30
Karen Eichler, a native of Grand Island, has always had a passion for improvisation and teaching and is thankful that she can combine them here at Niagara University as a public speaking instructor.

After receiving her BA in English and MA in English Education from SUNY Buffalo, she immediately started teaching. She first taught at NU as a Writing 100 professor from 1997 until 1999 then came back in 2008 to teach Public Speaking along with Writing 100.

Currently, she focuses on Public Speaking.

“Professor Eichler is really an asset to the Communication Studies Department,” said Dr. Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies. “She has an amazing way of making even the most nervous or reluctant student a better public speaker. Students seem very comfortable in her class.

“Plus, they all seem to have a lot of fun with their assignments.”

Like many of her students, Eichler loves hearing everyone’s speeches. With such a wide-range of variety that the students share, it’s hard not to relate or show some interest in them.

Eichler thoroughly enjoys these classes even though at times they can be stressful.

“Part of why we have so much fun is because I get to bring in some improvisational games and techniques,” she said. “I hope I can make it less stressful for my students.”

Eichler was crazy about the British version of the TV show “Whose Line Is It Anyway?” and that’s what got her interested in improv.

“I saw the audition notice and just had to be a part of it even though I had never performed before,” she said.

Eichler began improvising in 1997 with ComedySportz of Buffalo, which is an international improvisation troupe. She studied with The Second City in Toronto and is now a founding member of Defiant Monkey Improv, which is a two-person show that performs in Lockport at the Kenan’s Center’s Taylor Theatre.

More recently she’s gotten to do some “acting-acting” (as she calls it), where lines are memorized versus making them up.

She recently completed “Noises Off” at the Lancaster Opera House, and will appear in the opera house’s “Something’s Afoot” in October.

During the summer, she starred in “Cosi” at the Taylor Theatre.

“NU is very lucky to have Professor Eichler teaching one of its public speaking courses,” Churcher said. “Not only does she help allay students’ fears, but she teaches students a valuable skill that is useful in any major.”