

On a Quest for Understanding Isabel Pellegrino

In a short five weeks, I will be a college graduate. Not too long ago, it felt like a daunting prospect. But with the help of GW Career Quest, its leaders, and my peers, I finally feel like I am on my way to better things post-college. Although my collegiate career has geared me up for the work force with the necessary skills, knowledge, and curiosity, it's still hard to believe my time here is about to wrap up. While I know that I'm ready for what is ahead, the professional world, or vast universe outside of GW's campus, holds many unknowns. For a long time, I've thought, "If only I was able to see my future first-hand, I feel like I could better act on the possibilities of life ahead." And Career Quest gave me that opportunity – acting like a time machine, it brought me to the places and people that set the standards of the professional world high. My peers and I traveled to the heart of New York City and met distinguished professionals, saw their incredible workspaces, and heard about their own unique and professional paths. In a quick two days, the world beyond college became more real, more possible, and more exciting. Suddenly, graduating felt like my parlay into life-long learning, rather than a daunting end to my development.

On our first day in the city, we swiveled through the crowds in our best business casual to meet with eMarketer, NBA, and Bloomberg. While we had all heard of Madison Avenue and several of the big company's names before, it was incredible to step into the reality of their worlds. From the experiencing the company's culture to learning more about their work and goals, I felt very fortunate to be in those rooms. We received information that went beyond what was offered online or could be heard outside the company's walls. My understanding of career paths in the Media and Communications space was completely, and thankfully, shattered. I learned that employers truly value curiosity, coach ability, and eagerness to learn and work. I also learned that there is not one path to follow or job title to search for. What matters is your ability to be engaged, ask questions, and reach out to others. No good job is done alone; so including others in your job search, reaching out for guidance, and asking questions can go a long way. At the end of our day, we attended a GW Alumni Networking event, where I learned that "networking" isn't so unnatural and terrifying after all. Both students and graduates bonded over their shared experiences in college and shared tips on how to transfer and amplify our skillsets in the workforce.

After our second day came to an end, I was equally exhausted as I was energized to apply for more jobs, reach out to new people, and send my thank you's to all the amazing people we had met. Hopping on the Amtrak home, I could not believe I had just explored a Facebook office decked out in art or Spotify's NYC set-up featuring a Kombucha bar. But more than anything else, I was so excited and eager to be a part of the companies' value for development, innovation, and creativity. There was no time left to be fearful or hesitant of the future. My friend and I took our seats on the train, opened our laptops, and got to work. On our quest to understand more about our potential careers, the only thing left to do was to take action and make the lives we yearned for happen. Career Quest was a monumental step for us getting there and I am so grateful!