

## **A trip to remember**

By Mailinh McNicholas

As a senior in the School of Media and Public Affairs, I've realized that I've wanted to work for a digital publication that combines my love for women's interests, politics, and current events. As my May graduation date looms in the future my anxiety has increased because the job search seemed all-consuming and utterly overwhelming. I applied to Career Quest because I wanted to learn about how to best position myself for employment and career fulfillment after graduation. Upon reflection, I couldn't be happier with my experience with Career Quest as I'm more confident than ever about my career prospects post-graduation. My trip was filled with dozens of learning moments and below are a few of the highlights.

Although I've been fortunate to visit New York City many times before, this trip was different. I walked down the crowded sidewalks and encountered people from every age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, background, and professional industry. I felt inspired by the city's charm of offering infinite opportunities for learning and growth. I talked with professionals that came from every background and I realized that I too have the potential to find fulfillment and success in New York City. Just by being in the same room as successful people in my desired industry, finding a job in New York felt more attainable.

We visited a wide variety of companies including eMarketer, Facebook, Spotify, and Bustle. I learned something different at each site, but there were consistent themes in each company's presentation. At each site visit, a presenter told us that there is no such thing as taking the 'wrong' job after graduation. This wisdom dramatically decreased my anxiety that I'd take the wrong job after graduation and position myself poorly for a job that I'd want five years into my career. However, being told that in just about any industry, including tech and media, the constant evolution and nature of the work allows professionals to work in a variety of roles made me feel less anxious.

Each presentation also highlighted the importance of searching for a position with opportunity or learning and the importance of finding an employer whose values align with yours. Visiting offices helped me appreciate the importance of company culture in finding personal career fulfillment. Furthermore, a conversation at Facebook illustrated to me that being able to perform a variety of tasks in a position should be a criterion in my job search because opportunities for learning are desperately important for early career development. I plan to use these criteria to weigh prospective employers after graduation, and I think my career will progress more effectively as a result.

Through the Career Quest, I attended a GW alumni networking event at the Princeton Club, where I was again pleasantly surprised by how willing people were to assist me in making the

transition from university to career. The conversations were not only stimulating, but they helped illustrate the importance of networking to my professional development. Several of the alumni I talked to were hired for their current position because of a personal connection. I had delightful conversations with a recent graduate who works at the MET and with a recruiter at Estee Lauder and a plethora of insight into the media industry.

In all honesty, my trip was absolutely exhausting. I wanted to explore in the city that never sleeps which made my 7 AM wake-ups that much more difficult. However, I couldn't be happier that I was selected for this program. I believe that exposure to the media and tech industry that Career Quest gave me access to will benefit me in ways that I don't fully realize yet. The job search seems much more manageable and now I'm more confident than ever that I'm a competitive candidate in the media and tech space. Now I just have to focus on graduating.