

New York New Outlook – 9 ways to grow your career



“Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs.”— Farrah Gray

By Aisha Azimi

I was chosen as one of 13 GW students to participate in this year’s New York City Career Quest, designed by the Center for Career Services and made possible by the Shenkman Career Fund. The two-day program packed in site visits to some of the most influential media and PR companies in the country. The experience changed my outlook on what I want to be doing for the rest of my professional life and I recommend it to anyone who wants candid insights into the industry from leaders themselves.

Going in, I thought Career Quest would be a few company site visits. I thought it would be a field trip to New York to fine tune my professional networking skills and learn about internship opportunities.

I did all of that, and so much more.

I hesitate to say Career Quest was an experience I will always remember, because it’s not over yet. That’s what is most amazing about the program - it doesn’t end after the ride back to DC. At the farewell celebration, once we were awarded our certificates of completion, facilitators Amanda Rey and Jen Cadman reminded us of all the opportunities still available to us. The sheer number of fellowships and grants to choose from are a testament to the charitable alumni who want students like myself to thrive at the place where they got their start. I will

be forever grateful for their generosity. We had the privilege of meeting a handful of impressive alumni in our travels, including Amanda, learning director from Time Inc, Diane, investigative reporter from the New York Times, and Darren Davis, President of iHeartMedia.

I walked through the Pulitzer walls of fame at the New York Times, past Google nap pods and scooter stations, and out on rooftops with a view of the empire state and flat iron building. It was surreal. There was an indescribable buzz of energy when I peered through TV test kitchens and control rooms at Time and radio booths of esteemed talk show personalities at iHeart.



Before starting the program, my long term goal was to find a career helping people. Before, that meant I had to sacrifice my creative side, since media and entertainment companies don't always prioritize philanthropy. Corporate social responsibility can be an afterthought disconnected with the core functions of companies. My past ventures into the media communications realm have always intersected with the nonprofit sector so I could live up to my values.

My dream, though, is to work at a place that will allow me to use impactful storytelling to bring attention to causes I'm passionate about. What stuck out to me the most from our site visit to Grey was the advertisement for Post-its. The commercial followed a young black student using post-its to organize her thoughts for an upcoming spoken-word performance. Using the advertising platform to advocate for creativity in minority voices completely captivated me while watching that I forgot it was an advertisement (until the post-it logo popped up).

There, I realized I don't have to choose between my values and having a creative career. Companies in creative industries I admire are already using their voices for good, and I can too. What I'm doing now feels like the best of both worlds - I am the marketing and business development intern for a socially conscious jewelry company called [Bird + Stone](#). My projects revolve around getting creative to promote bracelets that help fund refugee girl's access to education and financial literacy training. I even spearheaded the creation of a PR outreach guide for our International Day of the Girl campaign with the UN.

Intersections DO exist and I'm glad I ventured on Career Quest to realize that.

To close, here are nine pieces of advice I gleaned from industry leaders and recruiters:



- **Cast your net.** Ask professors, family friends and neighbors for informational interviews. You'd be surprised how big your network will become.
- **Keep up with trends** in your industry.
 - Pro-tip: Lynda has literally every skill you can imagine honing in on from how to brand yourself to javascript. The best part? GWU has a subscription so students can use it for FREE. Take advantage, colonials.
- **Shadow someone** even if it isn't your industry. There's a lot of intersection

between professions and seeing the backend gives you a more complete picture of where your work fits in.

- **Don't network** only when you need a job. People on the other side aren't robots. They'll be much more receptive if you build a relationship before it's time to apply to internships/jobs.
- **Follow your favorite companies** on social! Bigger companies usually have dedicated @careers accounts with tips on how to get hired and job postings.
- **Passion** and being able to articulate your story carries more weight than your resume alone.
- You don't necessarily need to **major** in STEM to work at a place like Google. If you're willing to train on the job, you open yourself to a world of opportunities.
- Hate the 100 page readings your professor assigns? The skill of getting the gist of large chunks of information is a valuable professional skill.
- Get a job doing something you'll want to do for 8-9hours a day. If you truly love it, you'll **never work a day in your life**.