

## What Just Happened?: Processing Career Quest in New York

by Cailley LaPara

What did I expect for my first (and last) ever Fall Break at GW? Back in August, I anticipated four lazy days at my home in New Jersey, playing with my dog and catching up on homework.

This is not what happened. Instead, I was encouraged by the sunshiney GW career coach Amanda Rey to apply for Career Quest. I did so, and thus embarked on a whirlwind of blazer-buying and industry research. Suddenly the time came for Career Quest to start, and even an NJ Transit delay could not slow it down.

So here's what I knew about Career Quest before it started:

- It was happening in New York City
- It was going to be run by three smart, successful women from Career Services
- We would visit five broadcast and media companies all up and down the west side of Manhattan

Here's what I didn't know about Career Quest before it started:

- Whether I would like the companies we visited
- How to talk to employers and recruiters
- Anything about workplace culture

There are plenty of other things that belong on this list, but for the sake of space, I will stop here.

And then Career Quest happened. Within 48 hours, we trekked up and down the island of Manhattan, listened and talked to incredibly high-up people at tremendously important places like The New York Times, and collected enough business cards to start a scrapbook. I barely had time to register the significance of the people and places we visited before we were on to the next company, and ultimately on the way back to DC.

So now it's time for me to process. Looking back, the aspect I was most nervous about for Career Quest was networking. I'm still nervous about it, but I feel like I have the tools to successfully follow up with those wonderful, welcoming hosts in New York. I asked questions of our hosts during their presentations, and having that platform of communication makes following up digitally on LinkedIn or via email seem much more doable and appropriate (i.e. less creepy).

What about the companies themselves? Did I like them? Short answer, yes, I liked all of them. A longer answer is that while I felt welcomed and interested by each company we went to, I have a clearer sense of where I do not want to go after graduation. For example, PR is not interesting to me. And yet I am glad that we visited a PR company and learned about our hosts' career paths.

What do I want to be when I grow up? I'd like to write comedy for television. While we did not visit any TV companies per se, we saw aspects of publication, writing, broadcast, digital media, and more that are all encompassed in the world of television. Each employer that we visited mentioned the changing

landscape of media, a topic I (and all of us, for that matter) ought to pay attention to if I want to be successful in that industry.

Career Quest is exhausting and it is overwhelming, and these are two aspects that should be embraced, because it is also exhilarating and exciting and eye opening. I hope that everyone who reads this will apply for Career Quest. Anyone who participates will come away from it more prepared for post-graduation job searches, and we all know that preparedness is invaluable.