THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 3/10/2011	Title of Session: Consulting Careers	
Alumni Presenter: Marissa Folk		Class Year:
Title: Business Process Specialist	Employer: IBM	1100-1100-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1

Notes from Session:

Marissa has been with IBM since graduating from Dickinson. She chose to major in Economics because it was a marketable field, but selected a Religion minor to get a multi-disciplinary education. Being senior class president helped her secure interviews - leadership is marketable. She knew she needed to start the job search early. She did internships to explore career options and decided she wanted to get into consulting because of the variety of the job responsibilities. Marissa got her job at IBM through networking - she submitted her resume to an alum who was participating on a career panel. It took two months to ever hear from him, but when she finally did he wanted to schedule a phone interview, etc.

While at IBM, she has already done many different things, which keeps her interested, challenged, and on her toes.

-NASA - establishing a learning management system

-airport in Indiana - opening it up and ensuring smooth operations

-Homeland Security - establishing a citizen and immigration system online

She was brought on board at IBM as an Organizational change Consultant. She was hired to help clients understand their current situation, help them brainstorm what they'd like their future situation to look like, help them understand what problems and challenges there might be, etc. To help her acclimate to such a new responsibility, she took online courses offered by IBM - she states there's lots of opportunity for learning growth at IBM.

She advises being aware of your strengths and weaknesses and what you need to grow professionally, in order to be successful as a professional. You need to have the ability to learn as you go in consulting - it's sink or swim. Take the opportunity to learn from those around you. Take online courses. Read and do research. (She had to do extensive research for the Indiana airport project to learn how airports are built, etc.) Be well-rounded/multi-faceted because that's what the field is about - don't count on one thing to get you somewhere. Get involved on campus to show potential employers how you can work well with others.

Four job search recommendations:

-Start the job search early because it's a tough market.

-Use your alumni network and talk to people.

-Always give a brief synopsis including something that makes you stand out whenever emailing, also include why you'd be a good fit in the consulting industry. Take the opportunity to market yourself. She always led with being senior class president.
-As for an informational interview, give them your resume. Don't be afraid to request a phone call - that will allow you to demonstrate communication skills - don't rely on technology.

Advantages/Disadvantages of living in the city (DC):

-Huge social network

-Surrounded by different types of people

-Can learn so much (museums, so much to do)

-Traffic/congestion a downfall

-DC a very industrial city - not a location for nature lovers

Worked 90-100 hours per week for the Indiana airport project, plus travelling on top of that. Exhausting, but rewarding. Had to prove herself and use her communication skills - she was 1 or only 3 women working on the entire project. Learned that nothing is beneath you, as long as you put in the time and extra effort. Now back in DC, she works a standard day.

Keep a record of what you've done, the projects you've worked on - you have to be an attorney for yourself to get a promotions. You have to prove that you can work at a certain level.

Transitioning to a professional:

Realize that you can take all the skills you've used and developed at college and use them in the real workld. You CAN'T be the party person you were in school - you need to have a sense of professionalism. Be smart when talking about your personal life in the work world. Think of yourself as a brand. How do you want to be perceived? how do you want to be remembered?