

THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 05/05/11 Title of Session: Careers in TV & Film Production

Alumni Presenter: Steve Menzel Class Year: 2001

Title: Producer Employer: NFL Films/NFL Network

Notes from Session:

Academic and Early Career Background:

- English major, took as many film related courses as possible
- MA in TV, Radio, and Film from Syracuse University (2002)
- Writing skills developed from Dickinson were invaluable in graduate school and career. Regularly applies the organization, analytical, and interpersonal skills developed at Dickinson to daily interactions. A number of peers in graduate school didn't have these skills.
- Worked as a runner at college games – allowed Steve to do the grunt work and “learn the ropes from the bottom up”
- Original plan was to teach English and coach, then looked into the Syracuse program and decided to pursue graduate school
- Worked with ESPN in graduate school, which helped connect with first full-time job.
- ABC Sports was the first full-time job after graduate school – worked as an entry level production assistant, which involved research, graphics, and a number of unexpected tasks that required keen time management skills.
- Started working with NFL Films 2003. Had a former colleague/ “on air” contact that helped him network his way into the company.

Best part of the job:

- Variety and great application of his passion (football)
- Sports TV is not always glamorous. There is a weeding out process, so you must show that you can handle the job.

Skills to develop:

- Get some production experience – be familiar with Avid & Final Cut
- They can teach anyone to run the equipment, but you need to know the programs
- Develop and refine your ability to formulate and articulate ideas... this skill cannot be taught

Is graduate school necessary?

- Grad school offered Steven great networking opportunities and an internship that helped him connect with professionals in the field (which ultimately helped in securing a job in the industry)
- It can teach the “baseline skills” and technological knowledge
- Syracuse's short term program gave a basic understanding and allowed Steve to try out a few options

Suggestions for finding internships and jobs:

- Networking is KEY. It's helped Steve secure internships and full-time positions throughout his career.
- Don't narrow your search too much – being open to various areas (i.e. entertainment, sports, news, etc.) will give you more opportunities. Additionally, ask yourself if you are open to “both coasts” and willing to move for the right opportunity
- Look at what's near you. Whether it is NFL films, Comcast, local news, even stations like QVC, research organizations involved with production.
- Look for internships, seasonal positions, even volunteer opportunities to learn more about the organization.
- The best time to look for internships is early and well in advance of the desire internship timeframe. Fall is often the best time to intern, so don't overlook post-graduation opportunities.
- Be persistent. Never start a conversation or message with “Will you hire me?”...instead, know about the organization, ask questions, seek advice, and make a good impression.
- Use Dickinson alumni connections
- Show that you are eager, excited, and genuinely passionate about the field (or subject).

Feel free to connect with Steve. He shared his email address at the end of the session – steve.menzel@nfl.com