FOCUS ON ALUMNI

Where in the world are IMJR graduates?

In this newsletter, we’ve contacted three Individualized Major alumni in business, government and a non-profit organization to ask them about their work and the role the Individualized Major Program has played in their professional lives. While in different sectors of the economy, these three alumni share a strong appreciation for the opportunity to tailor their academic program to their specific interests. They also note the important role that internships and experiences outside of the classroom played in their professional choices. As you consider your own individualized plan of study, make time to familiarize yourself with the services available on campus to identify internships and other experiential learning opportunities.

Billy Haubrich
IMJR in Sport Promotion and the Media, Double major in Communication, 2008

What did you do after graduation?

During the fall semester of my senior year at UConn, I accepted a year-long internship with the Travelers Championship, a PGA TOUR event in Hartford. Upon graduation, I worked full time with the tournament as the Media Relations Intern. When that internship ended in July 2008, I signed on for a brief internship with the Pilot Pen Tennis Tournament, an ATP/WTA TOUR event in New Haven. I was interviewing for any and all positions at ESPN during this time. I received a call from ESPN offering me a full time position the day after I left the Pilot Pen Tennis Tournament.

I worked in the Commercial Operations Department for my first two years at ESPN. This department is responsible for monitoring and publishing all ESPN domestic and international network commercial logs. We worked closely with our sales division to acquire the accurate commercial materials and insertion instructions for each piece of television advertisement. After two years in this group, I transferred to the Research and Analytics Department, where I work on the Multi-Media Sales Research Team.

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Career Services is a one-stop location for advising on internships, majors, graduate schools, interview techniques and resume preparation. Walk-in appointments welcome! Go to: Center for Career Planning and Development.

Career Services offers Walk-in Counseling:
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesday 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Resume Critique:
Monday–Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

How did your IMJR experience prepare you for what you did after graduation?
I strongly believe the IMJR experience is for truly passionate students. When I entered the program, I knew I was passionate about sports and media and, therefore, wanted to pursue a career in sports television. After some discussion with my professors, I quickly learned that the university didn’t offer this specific major; however, there were other options. As I met with Dr. Lamb [then Director of IISP], I learned that an individualized major would be my best option to gain the knowledge I would need to pursue a career that I was passionate about. The classes shaped my understanding of the industry and the capstone class let me explore a more specific interest. After completing the program, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my career and felt I had the tools and education to pursue my dream. To this day, I still use materials from my UConn classes. I often refer back to Dr. David Atkin’s book “The Television Audience” to freshen up on television terminology. Additionally, I keep my Sports Management binder from Dr. Laura Burton’s class nearby at all times. I am truly grateful to Dr. Lamb and the wonderful IMJR staff, and also to the supportive professors for enabling me to gain this experience. I would not be working at my dream job if I had not completed this experience.

Is there a common thread that ties these experiences together?
Ambition. The IMJR program requires a certain passion for learning. Students in this program have that drive and ambition. This is a rigorous program that has numerous benefits, but you have to work hard. You have to create your plan of study, gain approval from the board, hunt down professors to gain entry to classes that fulfill your requirements, and be consistently flexible in adjusting your curriculum throughout the entire process.

What advice do you have for current IMJR students?
Get involved! I became involved with anything and everything related to sports while I was at UConn. I was the public address announcer for the varsity sports teams and worked under Mike Enright at the UConn Athletic Communication Department all four years. I got involved with the then newly founded UCTV as the regular sports anchor. Additionally, each summer I held a different internship within a different realm of sports media. I did all of this to find out what interested me in the sports media industry. I quickly learned through the internships that I did not want to work in live sports or at a sports venue. All of these internships provided me with real world experience that the classroom could not. I strongly encourage all IMJR students to get out and get involved in the areas they are passionate about in relation to a future career. It will only further their studies while at school and ultimately further their careers.

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Once again, I am very thankful to Dr. Laura Burton in the Kinesiology program for encouraging me to get involved and for becoming my mentor throughout my internships. Lastly, I would advise all IMJR students to reach out to the UConn alumni who have gone through the program. We have all experienced a rigorous IMJR major and want to help the current students achieve their goals!

Daniel Kidera
IMJR in Financial Law, Double major in Economics, 2006

Interested in the interaction between business and the law, Daniel Kidera chose to double major in Economics and Financial Law. In designing his individualized major in financial law, he selected courses from the political science, philosophy, economics and business administration departments. The IMJR capstone course provided Dan with the opportunity to investigate one of the most contentious recent Supreme Court decisions regarding the rights of business: the case of Kelo v. New London, CT on the use of eminent domain for economic development. While at UConn, Dan interned at Northwestern Mutual Financial Services, working in financial planning. He graduated from UConn in May 2006 with a double major in Economics and Financial Law.

After graduating, Dan worked as the Director of Scheduling for U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer from 2006-2008. In 2008, he assumed the position of public policy specialist at Yahoo! Inc. and worked on congressional issues for the company. In the fall of that year, Dan attended Villanova Law School, graduating in May 2011 with a J.D. He was sworn in as a member of the Pennsylvania bar in November 2011 and became a licensed attorney. He now works in the Obama administration as an aide to Secretary Napolitano at the Department of Homeland Security.

Dan had the opportunity to reflect on his IMJR experience six years after his graduation from UConn. Dan writes, “…I couldn’t be where I am today, working in the Obama administration, being a political appointee, without [the Individualized Major Program]. The… program… gave me the opportunity to really pursue my passions, academic interests, and truly discover who I was as a student and person. The program [let me] pursue what I was interested in, and trusted me enough to chart my own academic course without feeling the need to hold my hand with a number of requirements. That was incredibly beneficial for me, and allowed me to get to the place I am now. Thank you for hosting the program, and giving me the space and guidance to really chase down my dreams.”

“…The Program [let me] pursue what I was interested in, and trusted me enough to chart my own academic course without feeling the need to hold my hand with a number of requirements.”

--- Daniel

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Janell Mullen  
*IMJR in International Relations, 2007*

In pursuit of her degree in International Relations, Janell traveled to Spain in the summer of 2003 for intensive language studies in Spanish and followed that with a full year of study in applied economics and French at the Université Paris-Dauphine and the Sorbonne in 2005/2006. In her final year at UConn, she worked with the International Teaching Assistant program at the university while completing an honors thesis focused on an economic analysis of U.S. immigration.

**What did you do after graduation?**

I moved to San Diego, California and worked as an assistant at a law firm. Three years later, I attended graduate school and earned my Masters of Urban Planning from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

**How did your IMJR experience prepare you for what you did after graduation?**

It taught me about approaching learning in an interdisciplinary manner. I didn't learn "silos" of knowledge; instead, I was able to integrate the material through the program. This was very meaningful to me and has allowed me to take the same approach with the work I do today.

**What are you doing now?**

I am a Program Manager at the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative, a non-profit that funds and administers neighborhood improvement projects. The projects include streetscape improvements, parks, building facades, and other neighborhood enhancements. LANI includes the community in every project that it undertakes.

As a Program Manager, I oversee projects from funding contracts to project closeouts. I interface with politicians, community groups, construction managers, general contractors, and city agents from various departments (including Permitting and the Bureaus of Street Services, Public Works, City Beautification, and Neighborhood Empowerment) to facilitate the completion of the projects. LANI hires architects and landscape designers through a model which engages and involves the local community in the planning process. I am the facilitator for all of the project phases which include Contracting Phase, Design Development, Permitting Phase, BID phase, Construction, and Project Close-out. The job is very dynamic and I am forced to think on my feet and expose myself to various city departments and communities.

**Is there a common thread that ties these experiences together?**

Flexibility and a willingness to always try something new informs all of these experiences. I am open to challenges and getting my feet wet in things that may not otherwise be my forte.

**What advice do you have for current IMJR students?**

Don't box yourself into one career choice; try something and then try something else. You are so talented, so believe in yourself and do what you think you can't.

Thanks and hello to UCONN from Los Angeles!