

Getting Expert Alumni Advice

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'It's OK to dream about working at Google'

Here's the dilemma College of Humanities and Social Sciences graduates face in their initial steps into the professional world:

The requirements for many job positions include experience. But how does a newcomer gain experience if they're locked out of a position because they don't have experience?

Guiding juniors and seniors along the twisty, bumpy road after graduation is the goal of the CHaSS Alumni Lunch Series. Last semester, for instance, xxx professionals met with students to share their own life lessons.

In her presentation, Sheree Haggan offered a unique perspective — that of a career professional at Google, a sought-after employer that receives more than a million applicants each year. Haggan is Google's diversity specialist, responsible for maintaining relationships with organizations representing people of color, veterans, trans gender folks, and those with disabilities, just to name a few.

First off, a bit about Haggan: She's an Idaho native who came to USU in search of a degree that would give her the confidence and skills to overcome a small speech impediment. In her Communication Studies and public-speaking classes, she learned to speak for herself. After graduation and tired of the closet, she left Utah and headed to New York City, with plans to live as the gay woman of color she is.

As a newcomer in New York seeking a job, though, she learned from each speed bump and came up with three steps she found to be vital for career building.

Following is a condensed version of her insights in her own words:

Networking. Repeat, and then repeat again.

"Intentionally create and sustain a network and make it mutually beneficial.

"We say your network is your net worth. I firmly believe that. My network is what helped me land a job at Google. You hear that it's not so much about whom you know, it's about who knows you. But it's deeper than that, and you need to allow your network people and those around you to know what your dreams are.

"We're afraid that if we say our dreams and we (end up) not accomplishing them, we're going to be judged or told that it's too big of a dream."

(Haggan invites audience members to shout out their big dreams. One student says she wants to work in the U.S. embassy in Singapore).

"Awesome! Is that something your network knows? You can have the best resume, and you can work and you can be great for the role, but we (at Google) never see you. I encourage you to build up your LinkedIn network, because we have an entire team that sources solely off LinkedIn. They don't even do resumes anymore."

Prepare. Repeat, and then repeat again.

"It's so important that you're prepped for an interview now and you know exactly what you have to offer a company. You're interviewing all the time. You're building the content for your interview right now, and you need to make sure that the life you're living is going to hold up when you're in the actual interview.

"Have your elevator pitch down, even in the encounters that you have with your network."

Relationships. Repeat, and then repeat again.

"Study, get good grades, focus, take hard classes on purpose. But I think relationships are what's really going to set you apart — not only the relationships you currently have, but your ability to cultivate new relationships. My job at Google is relationships. I was able to get into a tech company with a communication degree because

of the skills I've developed to create and sustain really meaningful relationships.

People are really complicated, right? I work with some really challenging people. And friendships are hard — you have disagreements and there's miscommunication and it takes investment. That doesn't change when you enter the professional world, but now it's attached to your paycheck and your performance evaluation.

The ability to see the humanity within people and to be able to get along and understand people from all demographics and backgrounds and communication styles is really important.”

Podcast with Sheree Haggan



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