

BERRY COMMUNICATION DEGREE EXPERIENCE REFLECTION

My Berry Communication Department experience has been very different than what I thought I would be, in the best way possible. Prior to college, I always thought I was destined to be a journalist—writing invigorated me in a way that nothing else did. It still does, but I realized that I love being “behind the scenes” so much more. I stayed overnight at Berry as a high school senior and had one of Sam Nazione’s classes as part of my schedule that day. I remember being thoroughly intrigued, and it was the first time I never wanted to leave a class when it was over. I never forgot that moment—where I was hungry for knowledge. I remember taking one of Sam Nazione’s classes (once at Berry) and falling (truly) in love with Public Relations. Her class broadened my perspective to what PR allows organizations to accomplish, and how one piece of content that a Public Relations professional creates can make a significant impact on the way others view situations, people, and places—the potential to create something incredible is always looming, especially on social media platforms. I have not stopped talking about Public Relations ever since, and I am eternally grateful that I did not switch my major to journalism on the first day of freshman year. Though I have not been heavily involved in Berry Communication Department publications, I have been awarded several public relations roles outside of the department. My freshman (and sophomore) years, I was a sports Information assistant for the athletic department, which included assisting with managing the athletic department social media accounts. In that position, I learned how to act fast and with intention, but have so much fun doing it. As a person of faith, I have always been interested in ministry, and that aspect of Berry “culture” is a big part of why I decided to attend the college. In the middle of my sophomore year, I found myself as the Public Relations Coordinator for the Berry College Chaplain’s Office. This position has allowed me to grow personally and professionally. I not only have learned how

to fully represent a “brand sector”, but also how to balance planned and spontaneous content. I have learned how to receive criticism and pivot social media campaigns in order to best serve what “my” audience desires, and how to lead others through various communication plans and marketing strategies. Additionally, my bosses and coworkers have shown me what a healthy work environment looks like, and the productive magic that can happen when everyone is focused on the same mission, while encouraging each other in the process. My Public Relations classes have been particularly helpful in this aspect—namely Introduction to Public Relations and Public Relations writing courses. It was in those classes that I grew, exponentially, as a writer, and I continue to use my skillset that I refined in a variety of press releases and social media captions today. During the summer after my sophomore year, I was the assistant photographer at Camp All American at Perimeter Church, which is a weekly day camp for children ages 5 –15. In this position, I was tasked with photographing groups and individuals daily, and I taught myself Adobe Lightroom software. I learned to forsake my comfort zone and lead the execution of “group photo day” each week, where I had to manage a creative team of 4 others in the photography of approximately 20 different groups of 6-8 children and their counselors. Each Tuesday from 9-1, the creative team would coordinate and photograph their assigned grade levels--which included posing, getting all children to smile, and background consideration. I would then edit “group photos”, get over 200 printed, and package them in plastic bags, because that would serve as each of the attendees' memory from camp. In addition, I still had to candidly photograph group activities to house in their marketing “bank” for consistent posting on social media platforms, even into the offseason. Overall, that position taught me how to focus, operate with maximum efficiency, brainstorm social media initiatives quickly, and have fun doing it. I will say that attending Berry has proven to be the best decision I could have ever

made, at the very least, because it has taught me how to juggle a thousand completely different occurrences at once. Being an assistant photographer had a fair amount of unpredictability to it, but I was not phased, compared to my colleagues. That winter and spring, I was a digital content intern for Turner Fitness Coaching, a “startup” fitness company based out of Wooster, Ohio. This position was my first “big girl” public relations job, where I got to apply my writing, public relations, and multimedia skillset all in one large experience. I matured professionally and personally in this position, because I got a glimpse of the “real world” and how incredible being a communication focused professional is. I was taught the art of copywriting and interacted with everyone that my boss had encountered—from other small business owners in his area to state government officials. Also, I faced my fear of networking, and was challenged to reach out to 100 connections every week for six months. Because of this, I now love networking of all kinds—I have over 1400 connections on LinkedIn. Eventually, I want to hold a position in the creative department for a baseball team, and I have already had conference calls with two Braves professionals regarding possible opportunities. I posted daily on behalf of the organization on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook, and gained my first experience in dealing with a “viral” post, which I was quite excited about. Through a Berry College communication degree, I have not only gained the skills to be able to engage with a variety of audiences, but also gained confidence and assurance in my own ability to impact others through communication and in ways beyond that. I have found a clear direction and a more empathetic perspective along the way, which I am so grateful for. I believe that the things I have been taught and the relationships I have made will stay with me forever, but I have learned more than anything that my voice matters—even if I think I am not worthy of it. My words have an impact, even if I do not realize it—so speak up!