



Panelist Bios - Young Alumni Tips and Tricks for Success

Wednesday, June 1, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

Melissa Allen '17, '19M (she/her) graduated in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance, the latter of which she completed her Honors capstone titled “Ain’t it a pretty night?’: An analysis of Carlisle Floyd’s Susannah as an allegory for the socio-political culture of the United States in the 1950s.” Melissa remained at JMU to complete her Master of Education in College Student Personnel Administration (M.Ed. ‘19) and worked in the Office of Student Accountability and Restorative Practices full time before leaving to pursue her doctorate at William & Mary in Fall 2020. As a Ph.D. student at William & Mary, Melissa studies higher education with a research focus on the role of media in LGBTQ+ emerging adult identity development and the use of media as developmental tools in co-curricular spaces. Her current line of research explores graphic novels as sites of development as well as the developmental implications of trope-laden portrayals of bisexuality. With two years left in her doctoral studies, Melissa ultimately hopes to become faculty at a college or university and continue her work with college students, but this time in the classroom.

Kaitlin Daff '17 (she/her) is currently a fourth-year medical student at VCU School of Medicine. She graduated from JMU in Winter of 2017 with a B.S. in Biology and Minor in Honors Interdisciplinary Studies. In her gap year prior to medical school, she worked as a medical scribe in a family practice, a volunteer EMT, and as a waitress. In her free time, she enjoys taking her daughter to the park and reading Sarah J. Maas books. She will be applying into residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Paige Franklin '19 (she/her) graduated from JMU in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science, double majoring in Media Arts and Design with a concentration in Creative Advertising and

Communication Studies with a concentration in Cultural Communication. As a member of the JMU Honors College, Paige completed her capstone project, a research paper on the culture of hackers, in collaboration with two other students. While at JMU, Paige was an executive team member of the Madison American Advertising Federation, now known as scratch pad, and a Marketing Intern for JMU Dining Services. After graduating from JMU, Paige attended Northwestern University, where she received her Master of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications in December of 2020. Paige currently works as a Marketing and Corporate Communications Associate at Guidehouse, a consulting firm with over 12,000 employees based in Tysons Corner Virginia. One of Paige's biggest tips for young alumni is to make a real effort to regularly keep in contact with team members from previous internships or work experiences.

Sophie Jurgensen '18 (she/her) received a BS in Biology with a concentration in microbiology, and a BA in Modern Foreign Languages with a concentration in Spanish in 2018. She completed her Honors Thesis in the Biology department under Dr. James Herrick. Sophie started a PhD program in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences at Louisiana State University in 2018, where her research focuses on the impacts of viruses that infect microorganisms in marine hypoxic zones. She received a fellowship from the National Science Foundation to support her PhD research in 2018. After receiving her degree, Sophie plans to continue a career in science as a postdoctoral researcher. Her quick tip for young alumni is to really do your research before committing to graduate school - it is worth it to consider everything including salary/benefits, work environment, and whether you really need an advanced degree for the career you want.

Paige Moody '19, '20M (she/her) is a Double Duke, having been a 2019 graduate of James Madison University and the Honors College, having earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Modern Foreign Language, with a concentration in Spanish, with a minor in Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Honors Interdisciplinary Studies. She then earned her Masters of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in European Union Policy Studies and a specialization in International Security and Foreign Policy from James Madison University in 2020. She was based in Florence, Italy for her Masters Program, studying at the University of Florence and the European University Institute. She is currently the Office Manager and Paralegal at Whitbeck Bennett, a domestic law firm. Ms. Moody is also currently seeking employment in the public policy and military sectors in Washington, D.C. Her advice to young alumni would be to learn to adapt and pivot, especially with COVID. She applied to over 100 jobs after completing her Master's Program in 2020 with only 5 jobs calling her back. Having taken a job not directly in her field, she has learned a ton and wants to pursue a law degree in the future.