



Sophomore Career Connections:
Linking the Liberal Arts to the World of Work
January 22–24, 2016
Vassar College

Event Program and Mentor Index

About
Sophomore
Career
Connections

Welcome to Vassar's second annual *Sophomore Career Connections* program! The Career Development Office and the Office of Alumnae/i Affairs and Development are delighted to welcome you to this weekend of networking and professional self-discovery.

Vassar's *Sophomore Career Connections* is designed to introduce second-year students to the vast array of career options available to liberal arts graduates. Drawing on the expertise of one of Vassar's very best career resources—our alumnae/i and parent mentors—we hope to help students complement their liberal arts education with industry-specific knowledge, tap into the extensive Vassar network, and focus on their professional development in a safe space. Making these connections will serve sophomores well as they begin to consider not only summer internship options but also life beyond Vassar.

We extend our sincere thanks to the nearly 75 alumnae/i and parents who have generously offered their time to mentor over 200 students and lead industry-specific career clusters over the course of the weekend. It is our hope that the mentors will also enjoy this opportunity to impart their advice and expertise and make new connections of their own.

Sophomore Career Connections is made possible by the generous support of Carol Ostrow '77 P'09 and P'15 and Michael Graff P'09 and P'15.

Friday, January 22nd

“Short Musings on Rebounding After a Stumble and Developing Meaningful Relationships”

Nicole Savage '08

**Program Coordinator for College Readiness,
University of the District of Columbia Community College**

Nicole will share her personal experiences on making connections and navigating life beyond Vassar at Friday's opening dinner for student participants.

Nicole is the Program Coordinator for College Readiness at the University of the District of Columbia Community College in Washington, DC. Savage's complete bio can be found on page 42.



**Our Keynote
Speakers**

Saturday, January 23rd

“Building a Career: Advice About How to Navigate Your Way from Vassar to the World of Work”



Ed Adler '76 P'16
Partner, Finsbury

&

Tony Friscia '78 P'15
President & CEO, Eduventures



Ed Adler '76 P'16 and Tony Friscia '78 P'15, who have hired and mentored staff and led organizations in diverse industries, discuss what they perceive as the keys to starting and building a career in today's changing global landscape at our Saturday breakfast.

Ed Adler '76 P'16 is a Partner at Finsbury, where he represents clients in traditional and digital media, financial and professional services, entertainment, and tech. Adler's complete bio can be found on page 14.

Tony Friscia '78 P'15 is a successful entrepreneur with extensive experience in business leadership and in providing strategic advice to senior leaders. Friscia's complete bio can be found on page 24.

**Program
Schedule**

Friday, January 22nd

Time	Location	Description
1:00 – 3:00 pm	ACDC Lobby	Student Registration <i>Check in once for the entire program.</i>
3:30 – 5:30 pm	ACDC West	Student Orientation and Introduction to Networking <i>Facilitated by the Career Development Office staff.</i>
4:00 – 6:30 pm	Alumnae House Lobby	Mentor Registration <i>Check in once for the entire program.</i>
6:00 – 7:30 pm	ACDC West	Student Dinner and Keynote Speaker <i>Featuring Nicole Savage '08.</i>
6:30 – 7:00 pm	Alumnae House Living Room	Welcome Reception for Mentors <i>An opportunity for Vassar alumnae/i and parents to network with one another.</i>
7:00 – 9:00 pm	Alumnae House Dining Room	Dinner and Orientation for Mentors <i>Facilitated by Willa McCarthy '92 and Vivek Mahapatra '05.</i>

Saturday, January 23rd

Time	Location	Description
9:00 – 10:15 am	ACDC West	Mentor and Student Breakfast with Keynote Speakers LinkedIn Headshots <i>Featuring Tony Friscia '78 P'15 and Ed Adler '76 P'16. A professional photographer will be on hand to take LinkedIn headshots throughout the day.</i>
10:30 – 11:45 am	Rockefeller Hall	Career Cluster Session I <i>See Cluster Schedule on Page 7 for details.</i>
12:00 – 1:30 pm	ACDC West and East	Program Luncheon with Table Topic Discussions LinkedIn Headshots
1:45 – 3:00 pm	Rockefeller Hall	Career Cluster Session II
3:00 – 4:00 pm		Free Time

Saturday, January 23rd (Continued)

Time	Location	Description
4:15 – 5:45 pm	2 nd Floor ACDC	Mentor and Student Networking Reception & Business Card Exchange LinkedIn Headshots <i>During this reception, students will have the opportunity to practice their networking skills with mentors in a safe environment.</i>
6:00 – 7:15 pm	ACDC West	Mentor and Student Dinner <i>Mentors and students are encouraged to continue conversations and networking.</i>
7:30 pm	Alumnae House Living Room	Mentor Reception <i>Network and unwind with the other mentors while reflecting on the day's events.</i>

Sunday, January 24th

Time	Location	Description
9:00 – 10:30 am	ACDC West	Mentor and Student Breakfast & Career Development Office (CDO) Resources Overview <i>Mentors and students will learn about the CDO's resources, including how to post and review job opportunities.</i>
10:45 am – Noon	Rockefeller Hall	Career Cluster Session III
Noon		Program Concludes

While the program formally concludes on Sunday, additional programming will be offered for all students on Tuesday, January 26th, Wednesday, January 27th, and throughout the semester (see next page for details).

Check <http://careers.vassar.edu/news/calendar/> for the latest career-related events.

**Program
Schedule**

Tuesday, January 26th

Time	Location	Description
12:00 – 1:00 pm	College Center MPR	Workshop: Resumania! <i>Hoping to update your resume? Not sure what lies ahead following graduation? Regardless of your situation, you'll need a resume. Come learn the do's and don'ts of resume writing!</i>
1:00 – 2:00 pm	College Center MPR	Workshop: Jumpstart Your Internship Search <i>Get an overview of all of the resources available to help you land an excellent summer internship and develop your action plan.</i>
2:00 – 3:00 pm	College Center MPR	Workshop: Networking or Not Working: Uncovering the Hidden Job Market <i>70-80% of jobs/ internships are unadvertised and only accessible by networking. It's never too early to build your career connections. We will cover strategies for identifying, contacting, and following up with your network (in person and online).</i>
3:00 – 4:00 pm	College Center MPR	Workshop: Landed the Interview... Now What? <i>This workshop will cover types of interviews, how to prepare, what to expect, how to make a great first impression and how to follow up after the interview. Now is the time to prepare for any upcoming interviews, including informational interviews with alumnae/i!</i>
4:00 – 5:00 pm	College Center MPR	Walk-in Resume and Cover Letter Reviews <i>CDO staff will be on hand to provide on-the-spot resume and cover letter reviews. Bring hardcopies or your laptop!</i>

Wednesday, January 27th

Time	Location	Description
4:00 – 5:00 pm	UpC	Vassar-Connected Summer Experiences That Make a Difference <i>Program directors and past program participants will give a brief overview of some Vassar-funded summer programs and opportunities, including Ford, URSI, Burnam, Tananbaum, the Internship Grant Fund, and many more! Sponsored by the Office of Fellowships and Pre-Health Advising.</i>

Career Cluster Index

Each industry cluster will take place twice on Saturday, January 23rd and once on Sunday, January 24th. As indicated on the Program Schedule, the individual sessions start at 10:30 am and 1:45 pm on Saturday, and 10:45 am on Sunday, respectively. All sessions will take place in Rockefeller Hall, and each industry cluster will be held in the same room for all three sessions.

See the following index for room assignments:

Industry	Room in Rockefeller Hall
Advertising/Marketing/ Public Relations	304
Architecture/Urban Planning	Political Science Lounge – 109
Arts	201
Business/Entrepreneurship	312
Computing/Technology	308
Education	212
Entertainment/Media	310
Environment/Sustainability	Philosophy Lounge – 413
Financial Services	301
Government/Public Service	101
Health/Medicine	104
International Affairs/Global Careers	300
Law/Legal Services	112
Non-Profit/Social Justice	210
Scientific Research	203
Writing/Publishing	307

Students will find a personalized Cluster Schedule in their SCC folder. Cluster assignments are final. Please attend the clusters indicated on your personalized schedule, at the designated times.

Student Raffles

Raffles will take place throughout the weekend. Students will have an opportunity to win a variety of prizes, including industry book picks, “internship search survival kits,” and M&Ms/Mars gift baskets. Students must be present to win!

Career
Cluster
Schedule

Mentors by Industry Cluster – Index

Although many of our Alumnae/i and Parent Mentors work in fields, professions, and organizations that span more than one industry, we have assigned each mentor to an Industry Cluster. The table below matches our sixteen designated industries with the 3-6 mentor representatives who will lead these cluster sessions.

Our mentors represent some of the available paths in a given industry. While the career path that interests you most in a given industry may not be represented, our mentors are nevertheless eager to discuss your options and interests!

Mentors by Industry

At a Glance

Industry	Mentor	Position Title & Employer
Advertising/ Marketing/ Public Relations	Nana Baffour-Awuah '14	Strategist, Adoptive
	Kary McIlwain P'18	Marketing Vice President, Ann & Robert H. Laurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
	Tara Pyle '06	Global Marketing Director, L'Oreal
	Dini von Mueffling '88 P'17	Principal and Founder, Dini von Mueffling Communications
Architecture/ Urban Planning	Dan Dickson '07	Associate, Perkins Eastman
	Elizabeth "Liz" Hixson '06	Associate Designer, Damon Farber Landscape Architects
	Daniel McPhee '10	Executive Director, Forum for Urban Design
Arts	David Griffin '99	Owner & President, Landmark Branding LLC
	Rachel Hovnanian P'17	Artist, Self-Employed
	Pilar Jefferson '15	Museum Educator, Museum of the City of New York
	Carol Ostrow '77 P'09 P'15	Producing Director, The Flea
	Gabrielle Revlock '02	Choreographer/Dancer, Freelance
Business/ Entrepreneurship	Nicholas Coblenice '01	Founder, Cords for Music
	Natalie Keng '90	Owner/Founder, Chinese Southern Belle LLC
	Michelle Laredo-Torres '99	Principal & Owner, NY Nena Productions, LLC
	Vivek Mahapatra '05	Manager, Platform Specialists, Salesforce
	Lee Zalben '95	Founder & President, Peanut Butter & Co.

Mentors by Industry Cluster – Index (Continued)

Industry	Mentor	Position Title & Employer
Computing/ Technology	Alex Asianov '92	Founder & CEO, DOOR3
	Minerva Tantoco '86	Chief Technology Officer, City of New York
	Dimitri Wijesinghe '13	Web Developer, iVantage
	Nikki (Rosard) Wiles '08	Senior Technical Project Manager, Vimeo
Education	Nana Effah '09	Director of School Operations, Achievement First University Prep
	Aletheia Higgins '08	7 th Grade Social Studies and Science ICT Teacher, Launch Expeditionary Charter School
	Elmer Ildefonso '86	Sales Executive, TeachTown, Inc.
	Scott Mendelsohn '93	Senior Director of Work Readiness, NYC Department of Education
	Nicole Savage '08	Program Coordinator for College Readiness, University of the District of Columbia Community College
	Leighton Suen '14	ESL Teacher, Dorcas Center
Entertainment/ Media	Ed Adler '76 P'16	Partner, Finsbury
	Jasmine Brown '10	Segment Producer, ABC News/Nightline
	Liz Cole '90	Executive Producer, NBC News
	Emily "Emmie" Lichtenberg '10	Radio/Web Presenter, Beats 1 Radio/Apple Music; DJ, Self-Employed
Environment/ Sustainability	Megan Maltenfort '06	Sustainability Manager, VWR
	Dave Tobias '83 P'16	Director, Land Acquisition Program, NYC Department of Environmental Protection
	Dana Younger '75 P'17	Chief Renewable Energy Specialist, International Finance Corporation/ World Bank Group

Mentors by
Industry

At a Glance

Mentors by Industry Cluster – Index (Continued)

Mentors by Industry

At a Glance

Industry	Mentor	Position Title & Employer
Financial Services	Mario Arthur-Bentil '10	Research Assistant, Federal Reserve Board
	Lisa Gustavson '93	Managing Director/Chief of Staff to the Executive Committee, D.E. Shaw & Co., L.P.
	Valerie Kay '89	Managing Director, Senior Relationship Management, Morgan Stanley
	Margery Remler '80 P'14 P'18	Senior VP Investment Advisor, HSBC
	Andrew Susser '86	Portfolio Manager, Mackay Shields High Yield Group
	Kenneth Wong '07	Vice President, Centre Lane Partners, LLC
Government/ Public Service	Elizabeth Greenstein '87	Director of External Affairs, NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development
	Danny Kadishson '09	Assistant Director, Access to Services, New York City Mayor's Office of Operations
	Neile Miller '79	Principal, Strategic Associates LLC; CEO, Ultra High Materials
	Nana Lamousé-Smith '97	Criminalist IV, Department of Forensic Biology, New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Health/Medicine	Tawia Apenteng '01	Attending Neonatologist, CHOP Newborn Care at Pennsylvania Hospital
	Deus Cielo '92	Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosurgery, Warren Alpert Medical School, Brown University
	Phil Cooke '91	Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs, NYC Health + Hospitals Harlem
	Celeste N. Derecho, Ph.D. '80	Psychologist/Consultant, Self-Employed
	Dr. Ellen S. Marmur '91	Dermatologic Surgeon/Cosmetic Derm, Marmur Medical
	Robert Walker '79	Director, Division of Clinical Studies, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority

Mentors by Industry Cluster – Index (Continued)

Industry	Mentor	Position Title & Employer
International Affairs/ Global Careers	Hannah Beswick '09	Women, Peace and Security Expert, United Arab Emirates Mission to the United Nations
	Kyle Chea '10	Finance Associate, Baha Mar Ltd.
	Peter Korzenik '82	Founder & President, Give Back Global
	Ralph Mamiya '00	Team Leader, Protection of Civilians, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
	Tanya M. Odom '92	Global Consultant and Leadership Coach, Freelance
	Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque '00	Global Advisor, Community Engagement, United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Law/ Legal Services	Daniel P. Dain '93	President, Dain, Torpy, Le Ray, Wiest & Garner, PC
	Elysa B. Goldberg, Ph.D., Esq. '01	Associate Attorney, Greenberg Traurig, LLP
	Leah Goodridge '04	Housing Staff Attorney, Urban Justice Center
	Douglas Hand '92	Founding Partner, Hand Baldachin & Amburgey LLP
	Tracy Poole '82	Assistant General Counsel, Johnson & Johnson
Non-Profit/ Social Justice	Michelle DeFossett '87	VP of Finance, HR & Admin, Sponsors for Educational Opportunities
	Eva Dolgin, LMSW '02	Director of Community Education and Prevention Programs, My Sisters' Place, Inc.
	John McIlwain P'18	Vice President for Advancement, Aspire
	Nicole Wong '15	High Risk Case Manager, Family Services, Inc.

**Mentors by
Industry**

At a Glance

Mentors by Industry Cluster – Index (Continued)

Industry	Mentor	Position Title & Employer
Scientific Research	Eve Slater, MD '67	Professor of Clinical Medicine, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
	Michael Starnbach '87	Professor of Microbiology & Immunobiology, Harvard Medical School
	Eileen Strauss '76	President (retired), BizIntell, Inc.
Writing/Publishing	Jean-Luc Bouchard '14	Humor Writer, BuzzFeed
	Carla De Ycaza '06	Editor, Dialogues on Historical Justice and Memory Network, Columbia University
	Mary Fletcher '10	Senior Photo Editor, Refinery29
	Roger Gibian '90	Writer/Consultant, Self-Employed

Mentors by Industry

At a Glance

Mentor Index

Participant Bios and Advice

Ed Adler '76 P'16 [LinkedIn](#)

Partner, Finsbury

New York

Major at Vassar: Political Science

Advanced Degree: MA, New York University



Ed Adler '76 P'16 is a Partner at Finsbury, where he represents clients in traditional and digital media, financial and professional services, entertainment, and tech. He also leads the firm's marketing efforts. Finsbury, a WPP-owned firm, is a global leader in strategic corporate, financial, and crisis communications. Adler has expertise in all aspects of corporate communications including reputation management, brand building, and crisis, internal, and financial communications. A highly respected communications professional, he managed global corporate communications at Time Warner Inc. before going on to build a strategic communications practice. A native New Yorker, he holds a B.A. from Vassar College and an M.A. in Journalism from NYU. He is on the board of the City Parks Foundation and Vassar College President's Advisory Council, and serves as an honorary board member of New York Cares. He is listed in Who's Who In America.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Over the course of my career I've had dozens and dozens of people working for me both at a large media and entertainment company and at a strategic communications firm. People ask, how do you advance? Simple advice: network to get your foot in the door, work as hard as you can to impress once you're in, learn as much as you can about the business you're in, take initiative and work hard to show what you know. Once you're comfortable, don't be afraid to speak up and share your ideas. Senior people always appreciate when you show what you've learned and what you can do. If you do these things, you'll be noticed and can move up quickly. There's no barrier for young people to advance and move up in today's workforce.

Tawia Apenteng '01

Attending Neonatologist,

CHOP Newborn Care at Pennsylvania Hospital

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Major at Vassar: Biology and Economics

Advanced Degree: MD, University of Pennsylvania



Tawia Apenteng grew up in Togo and Ghana, neighboring countries in West Africa. At the age of 17, she came to Vassar to pursue her Bachelor's degree. After exploring both the arts and sciences, she decided that her true passion was in medicine. She went on to attend medical school at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and completed residency and fellowship training at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. As a neonatologist with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Newborn Care Network, she takes care of premature babies and critically-ill newborns. She is also involved in international health work in Ghana.

Advice for the Class of 2018: No matter what career path you choose, make sure you are excited and passionate about it. Success takes hard work - it is difficult to persevere if you lack passion and ambition. Learn as you go forward, seek mentors along the way, remain compassionate and determined. Do not forget to love, live, laugh and have fun along the way! Stay connected to your friends and family as their support will help you during life's journey. Vassar provides you with the stepping stones that you need - use them and continue to build forward. The world is your oyster: you can do anything if you set your mind to it.



Mario Arthur-Bentil '10 [LinkedIn](#)
Research Assistant, Federal Reserve Board
 Washington, D.C.
Major at Vassar: Economics

Mario is a Dallas native who spent his middle and high school years in Accra, Ghana. After graduating from Vassar, he moved to Washington, DC in the summer of 2010. He began working at the Federal Reserve Board in April 2011 as a contract administrative assistant in the Division of Consumer and Community Affairs. Throughout the year, Mario transitioned into a contract research assistant position and became a permanent research assistant in March 2012. Some of his previous projects included using Tableau (a data visualization software) to create maps of low income tax filers in the United States and creating a national community stakeholder database consisting of community development players. He currently works in the Consumer and Community Development Research unit within the same division and has helped in the preparation and/or editing of reports such as the Survey of Household Economics and Decision making (SHED) and Consumer and Mobile Financial Services. Mario is currently pursuing an MBA at Johns Hopkins University and hopes to go into a career in data analytics or consulting after graduation.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Keep on trying new activities and if you mess up, it doesn't matter. Failure is a great way to learn. Assess yourself and keep on moving.

Take your work seriously, but don't always take yourself so seriously. Champions are made when no one is watching. Let your work do the talking, not you. Your professors are there to guide you and support you. Be the best student you can be and always reach out to them.



Alex Asianov '92 [LinkedIn](#)
Founder & CEO, DOOR3
 New York
Major at Vassar: Biology

Alex Asianov founded DOOR3 in 2002 and currently serves as President and CEO. He brings nearly 20 years of expertise in operations management and analysis including business process engineering, systems architecture and integration, and project management of globally distributed software delivery. Year by year, he has helped build DOOR3 into a boutique consulting firm with offices in New York and Atlanta, as well as an expanding presence in Europe. Prior to founding DOOR3, Alex worked as an enterprise architect and technology strategist for Sapient Corporation, SG Cowen, the Bank of New York, and ICSC, delivering high-performance/high-volume trading systems, counterparty communication systems, and other business solutions.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Don't view your degree as a final trajectory-determining event. You can always explore and change direction. Situational awareness and direction are everything. If you find yourself feeling a bit confused or going with the flow in your first couple of years out of the educational system, get help. Talk to people in and out of your industry, and develop an inner compass. Aimless years can turn into decades quickly. Extracurricular activities (at least competitive sports) add an incredible reservoir of inner strength and perspective; unless you're struggling academically, do something beyond studying and socializing. Know math and science. It doesn't matter if you're an art history major. Understanding the material world is part of developing mastery over your life.

Nana T. Baffour-Awuah '14 [LinkedIn](#)

Strategist, Adoptive

New York

Major at Vassar: Psychology



Nana T. Baffour-Awuah is a strategist with Adoptive, an experience design and brand consulting firm in New York City. He spends his days researching clients' business and brand challenges, analyzing findings against competitor and industry trends, and distilling opportunities and recommendations to optimize their brand and communications strategies. And when he does not carry work home, he spends his nights spinning words into essays and articles - some of which you can find on LinkedIn, New African Magazine, BuzzFeed, Elite Daily and the Vassar Alumnae/i Hub. At Vassar, Nana was a Psychology major, VP of the African Students' Union, Class Representative of the Judicial Board, and member of the Axies. He currently serves on the Programming Committee of the Vassar Club of New York.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Always ask, always listen and always try. You often have nothing to lose. Invest in friendships and experiences. Those bonds and memories will buoy you through trying times. Be willing to try new things and learn new things. Discover what you are good at and hone it. But remember what makes you happy, and do it often - if you're lucky you'll get paid for it. If you are often anxious that you may not be doing enough, you are probably doing perfectly fine. Relax. Many of us are still figuring it out (and yes, that includes figuring out how to relax). Vassar might offer you some of the most glorious years of your life; savor everything.

Hannah Beswick '09 [LinkedIn](#)

Women, Peace and Security Expert,

United Arab Emirates Mission to the United Nations

New York

Major at Vassar: International Studies

Advanced Degree: MA, Georgetown University



Hannah Beswick is the Women, Peace and Security Expert at the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations. She advises on the role of women in peacekeeping, post-conflict recovery, peace building, security sector reform, transitional justice, efforts to counter violent extremism, humanitarian action, and women's participation in governance and politics, the economy, and civil society. In this capacity, she drafts speeches and conducts briefs at the ambassadorial level. Hannah recently co-authored a new publication, "The United Arab Emirates Panel Series on Women, Peace, and Security." Hannah previously served as a research assistant at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, conducting research on women's political participation in conflict and post-conflict areas. She formerly served as co-President of Georgetown Women in International Affairs. Hannah served in the Peace Corps in Morocco as a community-based youth development volunteer where she implemented projects to enhance youth developmental assets, empower women, improve health education, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Find—or create!—a job that will make you happy. You want to wake up every day and WANT to go to work, so try your best to find something that you truly enjoy. No amount of money will make it more fun to go to a job you don't love. This doesn't mean that it will be easy to find a job that makes you happy. You will undoubtedly have to work your way up and do menial, boring, or uninteresting jobs along the way, but always try and work towards something that brings you joy.



Jean-Luc Bouchard '14 [LinkedIn](#)

Humor Writer, BuzzFeed

New York

Major at Vassar: English

Jean-Luc Bouchard is a Humor Writer at BuzzFeed.com, where he writes and edits satire and parody for the site and its social platforms. In addition to humor, he contributes essays to the site’s Books section and articles on depression and OCD for its Mental Health team, as well as covers topics related to nerd culture, such as video games, anime, and comics, for its Entertainment section. Previous to working at BuzzFeed, Jean-Luc worked for the publishing imprint Little, Brown and Company, and during his time at Vassar interned for the science fiction and fantasy imprint Orbit Books. His humor, fiction, and nonfiction have been featured on CollegeHumor and Thought Catalog, in the Chicago Tribune, and in the literary magazines PANK, One Throne, Specter, Danse Macabre, and Umbrella Factory.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Find something you care about, and make it your side project. If you want to write for a living, but have to work a different job in the meantime, keep writing on your own time. Keeping your writing muscles active is crucial, but you also shouldn’t just sit on what you’ve written. Solicit feedback from friends, editors, or anyone you know who can read, and consider their edits even (or especially) when it hurts. Take the time to read literary magazines and websites, to keep up-to-date with the personal essays blowing up on social media, and to take notice of and read the recently published books garnering praise from critics. We live in a world where most information is essentially free online, and that’s all the more reason to stay in tune with the goings-on of publishing and the larger literary world. And again: don’t fear or ignore criticism.



Jasmine Brown '10 [LinkedIn](#)

Segment Producer, ABC News/Nightline

New York

Major at Vassar: American Culture, Drama
Advanced Degree: MA, New York University

Jasmine is an award-winning producer with ABC News ‘Nightline.’ She is a firm believer in the power of Vassar’s alumnae/i network and got her start as an intern at ABC News '20/20' after reaching out to an alumna for guidance. Jasmine has a passion for breaking news, and contributed to ABC News’ Peabody Award winning coverage of Superstorm Sandy. She is the recipient of the 2013 CINE Golden Eagle Award for a year-long investigation into the polygamous FLDS community ruled by Warren Jeffs and two 2014 Front Page Awards for Diane Sawyer’s interviews with Malala Yousafzai and Hillary Clinton. While at Vassar, Jasmine co-founded Idlewild Theatre Ensemble and she now serves on the Steering Committee of AA AVC. In her spare time, Jasmine volunteers as a Wish Granter with the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Enjoy your time at Vassar, you have the rest of your life to be in “the real world.” Explore, push yourself to do something you would have never done, take a dance class, NRO a course outside your discipline. The options of who you can be and what you can do once you leave Vassar are limitless... that is both exciting and terrifying. You don't have to “find your passion” just yet, but figure out what you don’t like. This will go a long way towards helping you know what you want and what feels right for your future.

Kyle Chea '10 [LinkedIn](#)

Finance Associate, Baha Mar Limited

Nassau, Bahamas

Major at Vassar: History, Chinese



After graduation, Kyle lived in Hong Kong and interned at CLSA Asia-Pacific Markets Limited. He then joined the Bahamas Foreign Ministry, covering Asia, Middle East-North Africa, and Caribbean Affairs, and writing speeches for the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister. A brief stint in asset management at Corner Bank (Overseas) Limited led him to the bank's Head Office in Lugano, where he assisted the strategic investments teams. He then joined Baha Mar Limited, the development company building a USD\$3.5bn mega-resort in Nassau, boasting four luxury hotel brands and the largest casino in the Caribbean. As a Finance Associate supporting the Senior Vice President of Finance & Corporate Alliances, his responsibilities include scheduled & charter airlift strategy, residential sales, development of resort-wide International Guest Services & Standards, and China Strategy coordination and implementation. At Vassar, Kyle was heavily involved with the ALANA Center, with CSA, ASA, CBS, and as a founder of the MBSA. He played rugby, and was captain of the Men's Rowing team. He was an African Violet, and Daisy Chain Coordinator.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Never be afraid to reach out to someone because of their perceived status, or their professional title; the least they can do is say no. Always bring a small notebook and a pen wherever you go: you never know who you'll meet or what ideas may pop up. For me, the most important task at a new organization is to be noticed for the right things. Be one of the earliest people in office. Get coffee with people from whom you want to learn. Work hard, and be excellent always.

Deus Cielo '92

Assistant Professor in Neurosurgery, Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

Major at Vassar: Biology

Advanced Degree: MD, Brown University



After graduating Vassar, Deus Cielo completed medical school training in 1996 at Brown University. Cielo then entered an emergency medicine residency training program, and finished 2 out of 4 years before discovering his true passion, neurosurgery. Deciding to leave emergency medicine, Cielo refocused on neurosurgery, and eventually graduated from neurosurgery residency in 2006, after which Cielo joined the medical school faculty at Brown. Cielo remains in an academic setting, concentrating a lot of his time on training neurosurgical residents, as well as medical students and residents from other disciplines who rotate on the neurosurgical service. Cielo's clinical practice focuses on degenerative spine disorders, stereotactic radio surgery, peripheral nerve disorders and intracranial tumors.

Advice for the Class of 2018: I've always found these words from Teddy Roosevelt useful: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty." In essence, whatever you find in life that brings you joy, stirs your passion, and makes you happy, will without question require a tremendous amount of energy and devotion from you.



Nicholas Coblenz '01 [LinkedIn](#)

Founder, Cords for Music

New York

Major at Vassar: Sociology

Advanced Degree: MA, Columbia University

Nicholas is the founder of two startup social enterprises, Cords for Music and Izzygear. Cords for Music is a socially conscious brand that gives a portion of each sale to charities that brings music into classrooms. Izzygear is a new iPhone accessory that allows parents to take better pictures of their newborns. Before becoming an entrepreneur, Nicholas had more than 10 years of experience working with global brands in luxury and the arts. His specialties are around brand strategy including brand inception and positioning, consumer insights, research and marketing strategy. He holds a BA in Sociology from Vassar College and a Masters in Arts Administration from Columbia University. Nicholas was born and raised in New York City where he now resides.

Advice for the Class of 2018: A few things I always try to keep in mind when doing business. Firstly, follow your passions and do what you love—but always make your business decisions with strategy in mind. Second, always listen to your gut. If something doesn't feel right or on the contrary you know that it's going to be an amazing idea, go for it. Just make sure to test the idea, just because you love it doesn't mean everyone else will.



Liz Cole '90 [LinkedIn](#)

Executive Producer, NBC News

New York

Major at Vassar: English

Liz Cole is the executive producer of Dateline NBC and NBC News primetime specials. In more than two decades at the network, Cole has produced award-winning breaking news hours, historical documentaries, true crime mysteries and entertainment specials. She began her career as an NBC page and eventually joined

Dateline, where she produced some of the news magazine's most notable broadcasts, including Tom Brokaw documentaries on the detention of asylum seekers in the U.S., the Iraq War, and intelligence failures leading up to the events of September 11th. In 1999 Cole left NBC to work as the vice president and senior executive producer of content for the pioneering online network Pseudo.com. Cole has been awarded some of journalism's most prestigious awards, including the DuPont, the Peabody, and several Emmy awards. While at Vassar, Cole had internships at ABC, WNBC, and Poughkeepsie's own WKIP radio. She also co-founded and ran Vassar's first TV station, VCTV. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two amazing children.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Find an internship – or several – and soak up every moment. Meet people. Ask questions. Do more than asked. Be resourceful. Stay in touch. Careers are unpredictable. Prepare for the next opportunity – you never know when fate will toss it in your lap. In TV/media/journalism, storytelling is everything. Master that, and the rest will fall into place.

Philip D. Cooke '91

**Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs,
NYC Health + Hospitals Harlem**

New York

Major at Vassar: Africana Studies



As the Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs and Community Health, Education and Outreach at Harlem Hospital Center, Cooke sees the value of teamwork, community engagement and participation. He firmly believes that you have to value patients, see them as partners in their care, and you will see their health outcomes improve. He also believes that non-clinicians play a vital role in crafting messages that will positively impact how patients perceive and experience care. By using technology, word of mouth, community partners as health champions and health care providers as credible messengers, Cooke hopes to improve the community's knowledge about their conditions and diseases as well as the hospital's programs and services. Promoting the hospital's competent, compassionate and safe care is just part of Cooke's strategy to position the facility as a hospital of choice. He spreads this message through advertising and special events catering to targeted populations and a constantly evolving community. Doing so is not just a matter of building the hospital's bottom line, it's also about improving lives of the community.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Be the best you that you can be, not a facsimile of someone else. Manage your brand, manage your integrity and never lose sight of your goals. A Vassar College degree may open doors, but you must work with fervor and determination once you cross the threshold. Remember that success should be measured by your ability to satisfy that longing in your heart called destiny.

Daniel P. Dain '93

President, Dain, Torpy, Le Ray, Wiest & Garner, P.C.

Boston, Massachusetts

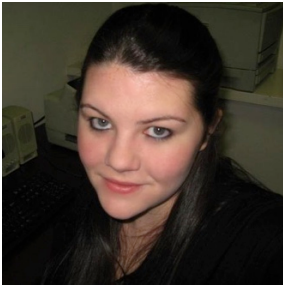
Major at Vassar: Political Science

Advanced Degree: JD, University of Michigan



Over the past ten years, Daniel Dain has founded and continues to run three different companies: Dain's law firm, Dain Torpy, now one of the largest commercial real estate boutique firms in Boston; a private equity fund, the Restaurant Investment Group, to provide capital for young star chefs to open their first restaurants; and a non-profit, the Needham Land Trust, to hold and enforce conservation restrictions on undeveloped land in Needham, Massachusetts.

Advice for the Class of 2018: I have interviewed hundreds of students and young professionals. They nearly all suffer from the same issue: they have not learned how to be advocates for themselves. Almost all people sitting for a job are passive, taking the questions as they come. You must be proactive. The job interview is a negotiation. You are trying to convince an employer to give you something that you want, a job; you have to try to sell something of value in exchange for that offer – your skills and qualities. These must be presented in a compelling way, through analogies to your past experiences. Once a person embarks on his or her career, do not be passive and simply wait for assignments, but rather be proactive and look to add value.



Carla De Ycaza '06

Editor, Dialogues on Historical Justice and Memory Network, Columbia University

New York

Major at Vassar: Political Science, Classics (Latin)

Advanced Degree: MA, Columbia University

Carla De Ycaza is Editor of the Historical Dialogues, Justice and Memory Network at Columbia University, and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Center for Global Affairs at New York University. She has worked with civil society organizations in Africa, and has held various positions at NGOs and legal and academic institutions in New York City. She has served as Editor in Chief of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Rights Law and peer reviewer for several academic journals. She has also taught at Hunter College and The New School. She is currently completing her Ph.D. in International Human Rights Law at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, and has a forthcoming co-edited volume on rescuers of mass atrocity in Latin America.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Although you might not have a specific goal in mind at first, do what you are passionate about and the rest will come together with hard work and perseverance. Sometimes your path will not be direct, but even the detours will shape you. My first job after Vassar was at a law firm, and I was hired partly because the person who interviewed me appreciated that I was a waitress in college. Extracurricular activities, internships and networking are extremely important for building your resume and making connections. Don't be afraid to ask questions and take risks. Treat everyone with respect and dignity, from the person holding the door for you to the CEO. Know yourself, be true to yourself and always keep an open mind to learning.



Michelle DeFossett '87

**VP of Finance, HR & Admin,
Sponsors for Educational Opportunities**

New York

Major at Vassar: Economics

Advanced Degree: MBA, Columbia Business School

Michelle DeFossett holds the CFO role at Sponsors for Educational Opportunities where she oversees the operational functions for close to 200 full and part time staff. She is an experienced nonprofit and finance professional. Prior to SEO, Michelle oversaw the CFO functions for several nonprofits. Prior to embarking on her career in the nonprofit sector, Michelle spent over twenty years within the financial services arena. She began her career at the Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A.'s International Banking sector. After Business School, Michelle embarked on a career within the Asset Management sector. In her various roles at well-established firms such as JP Morgan Asset Management, she led teams that were responsible for new product development, business development and process reengineering initiatives.

Advice for the Class of 2018: The selection of a major should be based on the combination of skill and passion. The career path that might ultimately bring you the greatest overall satisfaction and fulfillment might not fit others' vision for you or may not be in line with your current passion. Do not be afraid to have the honest and sometimes difficult conversations with family, friends and professors. A major selected on skill but without heart or any passion is no better than a major selected solely on passion with no talent or skill.

Celeste N. Derecho, Ph.D. '80 [LinkedIn](#)

Psychologist/Consultant, Self-Employed

Boston, Massachusetts

Major at Vassar: Philosophy

Advanced Degree: MBA, Harvard University; PhD, The New School



Throughout Celeste Derecho's career, she has been interested in the psychological factors affecting people at work. Her dissertation was on using personality testing to predict emotional adjustment at work. She ran a behavioral health department in a community health center where she set up a biofeedback program and instituted policies and procedures to improve access to services, and measure outcomes and quality of care. She worked as a psychologist seeing clients in private practice. Derecho served as an adjunct professor teaching crisis intervention, psychological testing, and clinical interviewing to doctoral students in clinical psychology. She has consulted with corporations providing psychological services to employees and Social Security Disability, and is the primary psychological consultant for several area offices of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

Advice for the Class of 2018: The most common question asked of me at Vassar was "What are you going to do with a degree in Philosophy?" I was told how impractical it was and that I graduated with the worst liberal arts degree, at a time when there was a recession, the economy was terrible and there were no jobs. Sound familiar? I found that I developed amazing skills. I learned to decipher complex materials, grasp the "big picture," ask the important questions, and communicate to others. 35 years later it turns out I have always been able to support myself. I did not major in Philosophy because I thought it would be practical, but because I loved it. Pursue what you love and you will develop great skills, find others with similar passions, and enjoy what you do.

Dan Dickson '07 [LinkedIn](#)

Associate, Perkins Eastman

New York

Major at Vassar: Urban Studies

Advanced Degree: MArch and MUP, University of Illinois



Since his time at Vassar, Dan Dickson has pursued a dual Masters Degree in Architecture and Urban Planning from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Upon graduation, he began working for a large architecture firm in New York City, Perkins Eastman, where he has helped design large-scale strategic plans and urban environments for both the public and private sector. He has worked on projects involving residential uses, large-scale mixed-uses, transportation networks, transit-oriented development, and waterfront resiliency. His experience extends outside of the office as a regular attendee of AIA NY events, and has worked with the ACE mentorship program to introduce high school students to the professions of Architecture, Construction and Engineering.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Vassar College is a great place to build a network, and I do not mean that in a suit-and-tie professional sense, necessarily. Time spent with fellow classmates, others who have a diversity of thought and experience, is useful because it will allow you to build friendships that you will have for years to come. These people will support your endeavors, and will give you the confidence to pursue the career you want. When you get stuck, they will be your sounding board. When you succeed, it will give you inspiration. Value them as you would any job offer or acceptance letter, because they may end up advancing your career just as much.



Eva Dolgin, LMSW '02

**Director of Community and Prevention Programs,
My Sisters' Place**

White Plains, New York and Yonkers, New York

Major at Vassar: Women's Studies

Advanced Degree: MSW, Fordham University

Eva Dolgin, LMSW is the Director of Community Education & Prevention Programs at My Sisters' Place, Westchester County, NY's premiere Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking survivors' resource where she supervises all volunteering, training, education, and prevention programs. Eva has explored the anti-violence non-profit world and provided direct services to intimate partner and sexual violence survivors through advocacy, counseling and therapy, along with specialized LGBTQ services and trainings, and engagement with the NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Through her work as an advocate for LGBTQ survivors, she discovered another passion – supporting LGBTQ youth. Since 2005, Eva has co-facilitated a weekly psycho-educational support group for LGBTQ and allied adolescents at CANDLE. She was also a lead facilitator, planner, and Board member for multiple LGBTQ youth and young adult conferences and retreats in the Hudson Valley and beyond.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Find every opportunity for developing new skills, especially leadership skills. Opportunities come in many forms; don't underestimate how much you glean in informal moments! Ask questions! Find the place within yourself that hungers to understand more, do more, explore more. Leaders, culture carriers, and movement makers are everywhere. True leadership skills take time and finesse. In the end it's all about our connecting with and "really getting" others around us.



Nana M. Effah '09 [LinkedIn](#)

Director of School Operations, Achievement First University Prep

Brooklyn, New York

Major at Vassar: Economics, French and Francophone Studies

Advanced Degree: MIA, Columbia University

After graduating, Nana moved to D.C. to work for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. She worked on elections, political party, and women's and youth empowerment programs in Guinea & Mali. She became interested in education management in domestic and international settings, and obtained a Master of International Affairs in Economic and Political Development from Columbia University's School of International & Public Affairs (SIPA). Following SIPA, she decided to work in schools, and became a Program Manager for Explore Schools where she oversaw assessments, data management and student recruitment as part of the Operations team. She is currently the Director of School Operations for Achievement First University Prep HS where she oversees day-to-day operations, human resources, and finance. She likes to dance, read, eat great food with friends, and spend quality time with her Vassar hubby.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Be an informed, critically thinking, and skilled force for good. Work in a variety of industries, take as many opportunities as you can to refine your skills, keep speaking the foreign languages you've learned, travel often and find a way to do it at no cost to yourself. Never stop reflecting about your beliefs, your motivations, your passions, and the places in the country and world where you want to work and why. At the same time, don't put too much pressure on yourself to have life perfectly figured out. You have many years and varying paths to find happiness, and change the world! I'm still figuring out what I want to be when I grow up!

Mary Fletcher '10 [LinkedIn](#)

Senior Photo Editor, Refinery29

New York

Major at Vassar: Sociology



Mary Fletcher is a senior photo editor at Refinery29.com. While at Vassar Mary majored in Sociology, focusing primarily on gender representations in pop culture, and pursued photography via the photo club Phocus which ran the student darkroom, and produced an annual publication FIX. Since graduating Vassar in 2010 Mary made her way into editorial photography through internships at Food Network Magazine and Instyle, as the photo assistant at Lucky Magazine, and as assistant & associate photo editor at Teen Vogue. She works behind the scenes to find and commission the right photographers and stylists, work with editors and art directors on creative concept and execution, and coordinates the logistics to make each shoot happen. Currently at Refinery29.com, Mary commissions, produces and art directs original photography content for the editorial Beauty and Entertainment verticals.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Use your time at Vassar (and beyond) to explore things that you feel curious and potentially passionate about, even if you don't really know where they'll lead. Take classes outside your major if they interest you, keep the conversations going after the classroom (which we know happens 100% all the time); you never know what passions or connections may arise and where they may go. Do what you love, stay curious, work hard, and be nice to people.

Tony Friscia '78 P'15 [LinkedIn](#)

President & CEO, Eduventures Inc.

Boston, Massachusetts

Major at Vassar: English



Tony Friscia '78 P'15 is a successful entrepreneur with extensive experience in business leadership and in providing strategic advice to senior leaders. He is currently President & CEO of Eduventures, a market research and analysis firm that provides proprietary research and strategic advice to higher education leaders. Prior to this role, he served for three years as a special advisor to the president of The New School in New York City. During this time, he spent a year as acting Chief Operating Officer, overseeing finance, human resources, IT, and other operating units. Tony founded AMR Research in 1986. AMR was the leading research and advisory firm in its sector, focused on global supply chain best practices and all supporting software and services. The company advised operating executives in the consumer products, industrial, life sciences, and retail sectors. Tony served as President & CEO of AMR until the company was acquired in December 2009.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Think of your career as a marathon, not a sprint. How you do in the first few miles doesn't determine where you'll be at the end of the race. So don't stress about getting the perfect first job, just get your career started and let your education and experience guide you forward.



Roger Gibian '90 [LinkedIn](#)
Writer/Consultant, Self-Employed
New York

Major at Vassar: English
Advanced Degree: JD, Case Western Reserve University

Roger Gibian is a former attorney and former international development consultant who has been represented by a literary agent and writing fiction full-time for the last several years. He is currently at work on his second novel, a Washington, D.C.-based political-cyber-legal thriller. When searching for an agent, he received 68 rejections over the course of seven months. Before becoming a writer he practiced law in Washington, D.C. at the international law firm, Baker & McKenzie, and at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. He also consulted on United States Agency for International Development energy projects throughout South and Southeast Asia. Over the course of a seven year legal career, he practiced criminal and white-collar defense, American Indian law, antitrust, and electric power regulation, and learned a thing or two about job-hunting and interviewing.

Advice for the Class of 2018: You miss a hundred percent of the shots you don't take. Life will be better if you do what you love. No one ever looked back on their life from their deathbed and said, "I should have taken the money instead of following my dreams." Job hunting is like starting a garden. Plant as many seeds as you can, as well as you can. You can't control which will sprout and grow. All you can do is your best. The surest way to fail is to stop trying. No one ever succeeded by giving up. Don't go to law school because you don't know else to do. Anything that's successful is a series of mistakes. Now go out there and start making the mistakes that will lead to your success.



Elysa B. Goldberg, Ph.D., Esq. '01 [LinkedIn](#)
Associate Attorney, Greenberg Traurig, LLP

Florham Park, New Jersey

Major at Vassar: Biology
Advanced Degree: PhD, Cornell University; JD, Fordham University

Elysa is an associate in Greenberg Traurig's Intellectual Property and Technology Practice and holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry, molecular, and cell biology from Cornell University with an additional focus in pharmacology. Elysa focuses on drafting patent applications, patent prosecution, and diligence. She also prepares freedom to operate and patentability opinions primarily in the areas of life sciences, pharmaceuticals, molecular diagnostics, and biotechnology. Before practicing at Greenberg Traurig, Elysa was patent counsel for the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). During her tenure at UMDNJ, she managed a broad portfolio ranging from methods of treatment to small-molecule pharmaceutical compositions.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Embrace the process of professional self-discovery. I believe there are two main prongs: 1) The Environment, and 2) You. In terms of finding an ideal professional environment: meet people, ask questions, and listen to what they have to say. Specifically, ask broad questions, such as: "What do you enjoy about your work?" and "Can you tell me about an interesting project that you are working on or have worked on recently?" Keep a journal and write down the characteristics you understand to be integral parts of a profession. To find your own path: constantly question yourself. Step outside of your comfort zone frequently, so that you are exposing yourself to different skill sets. Failures can be just as important as successes in directing you on your path.

Leah Goodridge '04

Housing Staff Attorney, Urban Justice Center

New York

Major at Vassar: English

Advanced Degree: JD, UCLA Law

Leah Goodridge is a Housing Staff Attorney at the Urban Justice Center, where she represents low-income tenants in all types of housing cases (i.e., eviction prevention, repairs). As an attorney, Leah has testified before the NYC Council on the intersection of crime and repairs in subsidized housing. This testimony was featured in a NY Daily News article on the same issue. Leah also teaches entrepreneurship courses at the City University of New York where she established the Community Economic Development project in 2010. In 2015, Leah taught seminars on social entrepreneurship at the University of Malta in Europe as a Fulbright Specialist. Leah is a graduate of Vassar College and UCLA School of Law.



Advice for the Class of 2018: Challenge yourself so that feeling uncomfortable in the classroom and workplace begins to feel comfortable. That is usually a sign of growth. In order to be a leader, you'll have to push boundaries; if you cannot push the envelope for your own growth, it will be difficult for you to do so for or on behalf of others.

Elizabeth Greenstein '87

**Director of External Affairs,
NYC Department of Housing Preservation and
Development**

New York

Major at Vassar: Anthropology

Advanced Degree: MA, Columbia University

Elizabeth Greenstein is Director of External Affairs for the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), the nation's largest municipal housing preservation and development agency. In that role, Liz has led the development of several important public-private initiatives including the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, a non-profit organization created in 2008 to coordinate New York City's response to the foreclosure crisis, and the Hurricane Sandy Housing & Neighborhood Recovery Donors Collaborative. Most recently, she led an effort that brought together 22 government agencies and a dozen nonprofit organizations to work together to jump-start change in one NYC neighborhood. Before coming to HPD, Liz worked as a consultant to nonprofit organizations, with a particular focus on strategy and fundraising. She has also served as Director of Development for City Parks Foundation and as Assistant Program Director at the Nathan Cummings Foundation.



Advice for the Class of 2018: I left college without a clear understanding of what I wanted to do next, ended up moving from job to job and, in turn, built a career by following my interests and by connecting and reconnecting with people that I've met along the way. I can't underscore enough the value of networking, and of staying in touch with the people you meet. You never know who you're going to want to reconnect with down the line. Every so often I'll receive an update from someone who might have interned for me years ago. I do the same thing with my contacts! It's very flattering to be remembered and most folks are happy to be helpful.



David Griffin '99

Owner & President, Landmark Branding LLC

New York

Major at Vassar: English, Art History

Owner & President of a comprehensive PR firm offering consulting services to the owners, developers and tenants of historic and architecturally significant buildings in the New York City area and nationwide, David V. Griffin is a freelance writer and architectural historian whose work has appeared in Dwell, Metropolis and the National Trust's Preservation Magazine. He has worked for over 10 years as a Senior Consultant for Thomas & Associates, Inc., the internationally renowned arts & culture consulting firm. Prior experience includes Co-Ownership of Gallery 384, a contemporary art gallery located in Catskill, NY. He is an Events Committee Member of the Vassar Club of New York and runs the Literary Program No Book Jackets Required for the Montauk Club.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Never underestimate the power of networking – but don't assume there is only one way to network, or that every chance to do so must be exploited. Social capital and social media are not always the same thing: a person should remember meeting you far longer than they do scanning your Facebook page. Homework outlasts college – whether you're looking to join an organization or found one, find out what the people who went before you did and why and how they did it. Don't assume an idea is new because it is new to you. Disruption is not creativity; passion is essential but unquantifiable. Remember the poet and translator John Ciardi's lines: "A man is what he does with his attention – and mine is not for sale."



Lisa Gustavson '93

Managing Director, Chief of Staff to Executive Committee,

D.E. Shaw & Co., L.P.

New York

Major at Vassar: Mathematics

Advance Degree: MS, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Lisa Gustavson is a managing director of D. E. Shaw & Co., L.P. and serves as chief of staff to the executive committee of D. E. Shaw & Co., L.P. and D. E. Shaw & Co., L.L.C. Prior to her current role, Ms. Gustavson was a senior member of the D. E. Shaw group's investor relations department, where she focused on product development, structuring, and operations for the firm's alternative investment platform and institutional asset management business. She joined the firm in 1995 and initially worked on a variety of asset management, information technology, and strategic planning initiatives. Ms. Gustavson earned an A.B. in mathematics from Vassar College in 1993 and an M.S. in mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1994. At Vassar, she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was awarded that society's prize for the most distinguished record in the graduating class.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Interviewing: Prepare! Make sure your resume is flawless. Thoroughly research the organization you are meeting with, and ask your recruiting contact about the format of the interview. Prepare and rehearse responses to common questions – you want to shine when talking about areas where you have expertise. Once you have a job: Get ready to start at the beginning. Any job or internship you pursue as a recent graduate will expect you to work your way up. Be prepared to soak up as much as you can from every assignment and to keep learning from your experiences.

Mentor
Index

Douglas Hand '92 [LinkedIn](#)

Founding Partner, Hand Baldachin & Amburgey, LLP

New York

Major at Vassar: Psychology

Advanced Degree: MBA, JD, New York University



Douglas Hand is a founding member of the law firm Hand Baldachin & Amburgey, LLP. Hand specializes in the representation of fashion and lifestyle brands as well as sports and media companies. He is an accomplished corporate and transactional lawyer who began his legal career in the New York and Paris offices of multi-national firm Shearman & Sterling. Mr. Hand is a member of the Business Advisory Committee of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and a member of the CFDA Fashion Awards Guild. He's also on the Advisory Board of the Fashion Law Institute of Fordham Law School and the Fashion Institute of Technology's Couture Council. Mr. Hand has been featured as a Fashion Lawyer in numerous media outlets and publications including the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Vanity Fair, the American Bar Association and Women's Wear Daily. He is the former Vice-Chair of the American Bar Association's Sports Division and was named a 2015 "Super Lawyer." Mr. Hand received his JD from NYU School of Law and his MBA from NYU Stern School of Business Administration.

Advice for the Class of 2018: If you want to be in a client services business, plant seeds for prospective clients early. A lot of my relationships – from college through law and business school – were with creative people, many of whom are now in the fashion, sports and media industries, which make up the bulk of my firm's clients.

Aletheia Higgins '08 [LinkedIn](#)

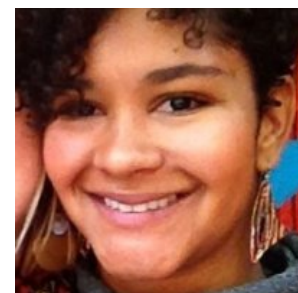
7th Grade Social Studies and Science ICT Teacher,

Launch Expedition Charter School

Brooklyn, New York

Major at Vassar: Geography

Advanced Degree: MS, Brooklyn College



Aletheia Higgins is in her 7th year of teaching. She taught for six years in the NYC public schools at P.S. 397 in East Flatbush, Brooklyn. While there, she bounced around from a 4/5th grade split small class (12:1:1) to ICT classrooms in 5th, 4th, 3rd and 2nd grades. She was also her school liaison for Educators for Excellence and took a leadership role in special education. Currently, she has transitioned to the charter school sector (something which surprised her more than anybody else) to teach 7th Grade Social Studies (American History) and Science (Physical Chemistry) in an ICT setting at Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School on the border of Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. She is currently applying to graduate school to study School Leadership and Policy.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Remember what Vonnegut told us: "Just because some of us can read and write and do a little math, that doesn't mean we deserve to conquer the Universe." Remain humble and learn from those around you. I've learned more from the veteran teachers in my schools than from any book on the subject.



Liz Hixson '06 [LinkedIn](#)

Associate Designer, Damon Farber Landscape Architects

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Major at Vassar: History

Advanced Degree: MLA, University of Minnesota

As a Landscape Architect, Elizabeth Hixson is actively shaping the world around us in various ways. Whether through moving soil on a project site or collecting neighbors' input at a public meeting, Hixson's job is to improve the local environment. The job requires creative problem-solving, basic engineering, and some artistic ability. Currently, Hixson is studying to become fully licensed, which is a process that takes at least a year. Landscape Architecture is a diverse practice that can range from city master planning to park design to residential backyard improvements. Projects vary by the day; Hixson is often at a computer but sometimes gets to photograph a new project site or dig in archives for historic background information. Please ask any questions!

Advice for the Class of 2018: I did not know where my career was going after graduation, but the two most important things I did were network and stay in touch with classmates. Appreciating the campus's beautiful setting, the landscape paintings in Art 105, and Urban Theory class gave me a strong base for becoming a Landscape Architect; I can say in hindsight that these classes helped but at the time they followed my interests. So my advice is don't be scared to try non-traditional things because you'll end up with a unique background and a more interesting story to tell.



Rachel Hovnanian P'17

Artist, Self-Employed

New York

Undergraduate Major: Media Studies, University of Texas

Born in Parkersburg, West Virginia and raised in Houston, Texas, Rachel Lee Hovnanian is a New York-based artist whose multidisciplinary practice explores contemporary notions of narcissism, obsession and intimacy, and society's alienating addiction to modern technological advances and media. She navigates the post-internet world, merging photography, video, sculpture, painting and installation art into surreal environments that challenge viewers to examine and reevaluate their own cultural values and relationship with digital technology. Judith Stein described Hovnanian as "a wizard at fingering uncomfortable truths," and Shiva Balagali referred to her as, "one of the more interesting feminist artists working in the contemporary artworld, delving into the important theme of beauty in her work." Hovnanian received her BFA from the University of Texas, Austin, and has since exhibited internationally in both solo and group exhibitions in the United States, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Advice for the Class of 2018: See as much art as you can. Always take some time to experience the culture and community that surrounds you and make sure to keep a healthy work/life balance for yourself. As an artist living and working in New York, I know how easy it is to get caught up in comparing your success to the success of those around you – especially now with the instant accessibility of the many social media networks offered from smart phones. Always remember to give yourself a break, refocus, and enjoy the moment. A great way to do that is by seeing some art!

Elmer Ildefonso '86 [LinkedIn](#)

Sales Executive, TeachTown, Inc

New Jersey, Maryland, and Pennsylvania

Major at Vassar: Psychology, Education



Elmer provides educators with solutions to help students on the Autism Spectrum master academic and social skills. He has spent almost his entire career in educational publishing except for five years in the Durable Medical Equipment field—which goes to show that you can switch industries, even at the ripe old age of 31! After graduation, Elmer had accepted a position to teach High School Spanish that fall. However, a summer job as a freelance foreign language editor with an educational publishing house completely changed his career path. The summer work became permanent and Elmer decided to remain in educational publishing where he has worked in Editorial, Marketing and Sales. Elmer supports Vassar as an alumnae/i interviewer and VP of the Great Class of 1986.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Take advantage of Vassar. Ask professors, administrators, and other employees how and why they got into their field; often, a certain career path isn't always an obvious extension of your degree. Plan ahead for the day after graduation, whether it's a job, graduate school, or a meaningful gap year. You should never feel "stuck" in a current job just because you entered it right out of school. Changing jobs multiple times in your 20s to early 30s is fairly common. Just have a new plan in place before making a change. Get good at networking and practice interviewing and marketing yourself. Seek out and ask for opportunities. Finally, max out your 401K yearly contribution; you'll thank yourself 30 years down the road.

Pilar Jefferson '15 [LinkedIn](#)

Museum Educator,

Museum of the City of New York

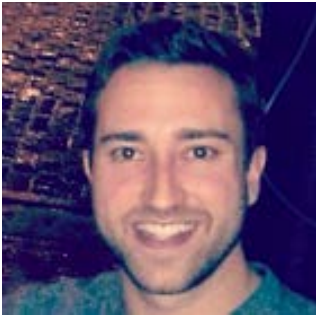
New York

Major at Vassar: Art History



After working at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center as a Student Docent while at Vassar and majoring in Art History, Pilar has pursued museum education in her post graduate life. After graduation she interned at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Education department with their Access and Community Programs division before getting a job as an educator at the Museum of the City of New York in August. She currently teaches K-12 gallery and classroom programs in American History at MCNY while also interning at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Starting in January, Pilar will also be working as an educator for Arts & Minds, a non-profit gallery tour and art making program for adults with dementia and Alzheimer's that runs out of several museums in New York City. Pilar currently lives in Brooklyn.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Pay attention to your gut. When you find a job, or an experience that gives you that feeling of fulfillment in your gut, follow it wherever it takes you. Also be patient with yourself. You do not have to hit the ground running all the time or be happy all the time. Being surrounded by the amazing people and opportunities Vassar provides can make you worry that you're not going to live up to those standards. Know that every successful person you encounter here got there by putting one foot in front of the other and following their gut to whatever opportunity felt right. Fulfillment should be your ultimate goal.



Danny Kadishson '09

**Assistant Director, Access to Services,
New York City Mayor's Office of Operations**
New York

Major at Vassar: Political Science
Advanced Degree: MA, National Defense University

After college, Danny Kadishson worked for a U.S. Congressman in Washington, D.C. As his Legislative Assistant, Kadishson worked on policy and legislation related to the Environment, Energy, Commerce, and Government Oversight/Reform issues. Kadishson then worked as a civilian for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Procurement) on congressional matters relating to the oversight of contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Kadishson later served as a Nonproliferation Fellow for the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration. During the evenings in DC Kadishson earned a Master's degree in International Security Studies from National Defense University. Kadishson currently works in the New York City Mayor's Office of Operations on initiatives that use technology to make health and social services more efficient and accessible.

Advice for the Class of 2018: You can help a lot of people by working in the government. The bureaucracy can be frustrating, and the wins can feel far apart, but they are big wins when they happen. Enjoy Vassar – even if it means sacrificing a fraction of your GPA, make sure you're getting the most out of college outside the classroom too.

Apply for internships; they're one of the best ways to ultimately get a job in government/public service. When you get internships, work hard and learn from everyone. Keep in touch with the people you work with in your internship.



Valerie Kay '89

**Managing Director, Senior Relationship Management,
Morgan Stanley**
New York

Major at Vassar: Economics

Valerie Kay is a Managing Director at Morgan Stanley in the Senior Relationship Management group. She is responsible for covering Morgan Stanley's top relationships across all divisions. Kay has been working on Wall Street for 27 years, 20 of which have been at Morgan Stanley. Prior to her new role in Senior Relationship Management, Kay has run multiple groups in Morgan Stanley's Global Capital Markets and Fixed Income Divisions over the years. Kay is on the Executive Committee of the Structured Finance Industry Group; she is also an officer of the board for the Studio School and a board member of the 52nd Street Project.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Be yourself and follow your dreams and passions. The finance industry needs more of YOU. We want young people who can think out of the box, are focused creating new opportunities, and can lead with innovation. We want people who can communicate, are confident, and lead by example. We want people who are passionate about what they do, respect others, and who give back to the team and community. We want people who have the courage to tackle problems and take risks. We want people with a sense of humor and a nice balance of intensity, ambition and humility. I believe that the Vassar graduate has all of these traits. I believe the Vassar graduate HAS a competitive advantage. I am a big fan of hiring Vassar grads.

Natalie Keng '90 [LinkedIn](#)

Owner/Founder, Chinese Southern Belle, LLC

Smyrna, Georgia

Major at Vassar: Asian Studies

Advanced Degree: MPP, Harvard Kennedy School



Natalie Keng is a food and culture expert, writer, entrepreneur and former elected official. A native of Smyrna, Georgia, she helped out as a little girl in the family restaurant as a cashier, standing on a beer box. Chinese Southern Belle is a multifaceted stir-fry adventure that connects food, health, education, social justice, the environment, and building community. Natalie (and co-host mother, Margaret) showcase authentic home-chef traditions through award-winning cooking sauces, hands-on cooking classes, and more. Natalie's dad jokes that instead of going to Harvard for graduate school she should have bought a fleet of food trucks with the tuition money. You'll catch her on TV and radio as guest host and commentator for PBS affiliates, and she's working on a book and family history documentary. Follow Natalie's food and adventures at ChineseSouthernBelle.com.

Advice for the Class of 2018: As a contestant in the Little Miss Cumberland Mall pageant, I told the judges I wanted to be a brain surgeon and own a Coke machine when I grew up. Organic Chem killed me, but I am living out a different dream, integrating what I care about – food, culture, social issues, diversity – into a business. It's the most challenging and rewarding job and is a vision that's still evolving. But teaching a class with my mother and seeing the smiles...is priceless. Follow your passion, but make sure it's well-funded with a solid business plan. Being a good cook or food lover isn't the same as being a good business manager or restaurateur. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Stay focused but flexible – you can't tell what will make you successful!

Peter Korzenik '82 [LinkedIn](#)

Founder & President, Give Back Global

Norwalk, Connecticut

Major at Vassar: Russian

Advanced Degree: MSc, Boston University Brussels



Peter Korzenik is the founder of Give Back Global, an international nonprofit that helps health care organizations in Africa strengthen their management/leadership capacity and business operations. This is accomplished by connecting young African health managers with highly experienced, senior-level American health care executives on short-term, on-site, volunteer-based training and mentoring projects. He is a committed social entrepreneur who believes that "business volunteerism" can be a powerful force for social good in the developing world. During his 25+ year career in international development, Peter has recruited and placed hundreds of skilled business volunteers overseas on management training and leadership development projects.

Advice for the Class of 2018: In my experience, there is nothing more important to career success than the ability to write a coherent sentence. If you can master this art, you will be in a position to influence others and bring about positive results. Read as much as you can every day. By doing so, your writing will inevitably improve – and this will lead to good things! Another imperative is to follow your passion and believe in yourself. Don't let others tell you that you can't achieve your goals. Refuse to let obstacles and difficulties stand in your way – they can be overcome by hard work, determination, passion, and good, old-fashioned luck. Finally, don't be afraid to ask for help.



Nana Lamoué-Smith '97 [LinkedIn](#)
**Criminalist IV, Department of Forensic Biology,
New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner**
New York

Major at Vassar: Biology
Advanced Degree: MS, University of Illinois at Chicago

After graduating Vassar with her Biology degree, Nana worked in an immunology laboratory doing basic research; however she realized that she would rather be doing applied science.

Combining that desire with her love of anthropology, mysteries, and scientific oddities, she applied to forensic science programs in the late 1990s. She graduated with her M.S. in Forensic Science in 2000. At that time opportunities for employment in public laboratories were limited and the first job Nana took was as a DNA Analyst I with The Bode Technology Group. There she worked on backlog reduction projects and on victim identifications from mass disasters. Upon leaving Bode, she joined BRT Laboratories, successfully getting their forensic lab accredited. After spending most of her career in private laboratories, she decided to transition to a public laboratory. Nana came to the NYC OCME's Forensic Biology Department in 2004. Currently she supervises Criminalists and performs DNA testing on criminal cases.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Take as many classes outside of your major and comfort zone as you can. You won't have the time later in life. While Art History may not seem important now, 20 years from now you'll wish you had memorized all of that wonderful artwork. The beauty of a liberal arts education is that it allows you to have *allgemeinbildung*, or to be "well rounded". You will acquire a lot of knowledge at Vassar that will serve you well in some capacity throughout your lifetime. Keep an open mind about your skill set as it grows and be creative with its use.



Michelle Laredo-Torres '99 [LinkedIn](#)
Principal & Owner, NY Nena Productions, LLC
East Northport, New York

Major at Vassar: Hispanic Studies

Michelle has been able to combine her passion for training and hospitality through her latest venture facilitating luxury customer engagement training for her clients throughout the U.S. With 14 years experience in the hospitality industry, Michelle has worked with a broad spectrum of clients including diplomats, dignitaries, CEOs and everyone in between. The secret to her success has been customizing and personalizing each client experience and listening to their requests and providing one-of-a-kind solutions based on their individual needs. Michelle has been involved with the National Hispanic Institute for over 20 years, receiving their Distinguished Alumnus award in 2011, and currently serves on their Board of Trustees. Her biggest accomplishment is being a mom to her 6-year-old son, Damian, who also happens to be her biggest supporter.

Advice for the Class of 2018: "Invest in those that invest in you!" I always felt as an employer that it was important to mentor and instill in my employees that they each brought different talents and skills to the team and that they were all valuable. I consistently trained them and looked for teaching opportunities on a daily basis. Ensure that your talents are recognized and that you feel valued wherever you choose to spend your time and share your talents. There is only one of you. Make sure that you recognize your own value so that others will as well. Take risks! Create a vision for your future and then go out and do what you have envisioned!

**Mentor
Index**

Emmie Lichtenberg '10

Radio/Web Presenter, Beats 1 Radio; DJ, Self-Employed

Brooklyn, New York

Major at Vassar: English



Emmie Lichtenberg is the host and creator of the web series 'Slumber Party @emmieshouse' where she interviews her favorite bands while playing truth or dare, doing makeovers, prank calls and more! Musicians such as Marina & The Diamonds, MS MR, Charli XCX, Icona Pop, Kate Nash, Betty Who & Astr have all crashed the party! Emmie DJs + promotes regularly at a number of NYC venues such as Up & Down, Baby's All Right, Webster Hall & Elvis Guesthouse. She has also DJ'd for and collaborated with brands such as Atlantic Records, Neiman Marcus, Nylon Magazine, Charli XCX for Boohoo, Songkick + Brooklyn Magazine. In Spring 2015 she toured with Brooklyn band MS MR as their opening act, was featured on Nick Cannon's 24 hr. Dance-A-Thon on nbc.com to raise money for Red Nose Day and opened for Marina & The Diamonds at her sold out Webster Hall show. Currently, Emmie is the resident DJ at Neon Gold's Pop Shop and is a presenter for Beats 1 Radio on Apple Music.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Be a self-starter! Social media is a great tool that you are using everyday so use it to your creative and professional advantage – start a blog! Use your Instagram for more than just food pics and selfies! It's helpful and strategic to acquire skills that will facilitate you being an all star self starter – take a coding class, learn how to design a flyer in Photoshop, etc. You'll be better equipped to take the reins on your own career as well as be more enticing to potential employers and brands. Take every meeting because you never know where it might lead, work hard, and be kind!

Vivek Mahapatra '05 [LinkedIn](#)

Manager – Platform Specialists, Salesforce

New York

Major at Vassar: Studio Art, Computer Science

Advanced Degree: MBA, INSEAD



Vivek Mahapatra currently manages a team of architects that meets with every level within a customer's organization to help them better utilize the full power of the Salesforce platform. Prior to joining Salesforce, Vivek was with a few different startups in technology, leadership advisory and consulting. In between those stints, he completed an MBA from INSEAD in France & Singapore where he focused on Organizational Behavior, Entrepreneurship and International Business Strategy. At Vassar, Vivek was able to pursue both computer science + studio art as majors and helped start a course still taught today which marries Art + Science (MEDS379 | COMP379 | ART379). Outside of the time spent between the compsci lab + art studio and parties/mug, Vivek was active in intramural sports, Davison, SASA, Sr. Class Council, VSA and NMUN. He has lived / studied / worked in India, Thailand, USA, France and Singapore, and is very passionate about international business, travel and cuisine!

Advice for the class of 2018: We're at this interesting point in our lives where formal education doesn't seem to be a prerequisite for success in your career. Maybe because just having a career doesn't equal success (like it did for most of our parents). Be mindful of their investment but also really honest with yourself when you do start to pursue your version of success. Some of you will want a really specific line between work + life, while others will blur those delineations. Your best bet is to take some risks now and get some experiences under your belt! You don't need to have the answers and the job you think you want might end up being the very thing you dislike. And please go see the world.



Megan Maltenfort '06 [LinkedIn](#)

Sustainability Manager, VWR

Radnor, Pennsylvania

Major at Vassar: Science, Technology & Society

Advanced Degree: MEM, Duke University

Megan Maltenfort is the Sustainability Manager for VWR, a global distributor of laboratory supplies and services. In her role, Megan leads critical sustainability initiatives internally to manage waste and resource use effectively and develops innovative solutions for VWR customers to meet their own sustainability goals. She is responsible for setting VWR's corporate strategy and targets around sustainability and builds programs that align with this strategy to meet public goals. She has created nationally recognized recycling programs that give hard-to-recycle laboratory waste new life and works with VWR's vast supplier base to drive responsible business practices throughout the supply chain. By finding opportunities to collaborate with customers and suppliers and with a constant focus on internal improvement, Megan has helped VWR to reduce overall operational impacts.

Advice for the class of 2018: My biggest piece of advice is to find your passion and live it! If you pursue a career that you are proud of and that is aligned with your values, you will enjoy what you do every day. Find a role where you feel engaged, motivated, and also challenged, and remember to build your networks now and never stop building them.



Ralph Mamiya '00

Team Leader, Protection of Civilians,

United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

New York

Major at Vassar: Philosophy

Advanced Degree: JD, Cornell Law School

Ralph Mamiya leads the Protection of Civilians Team in the United Nations Department Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support. He has spent more than seven years working on peacekeeping and protection issues, including tours with United Nations missions in Sudan and South Sudan. He is co-editor of the forthcoming volume "Protection of Civilians" (Oxford, March 2016) and has published articles on international law and international relations in journals and in edited volumes, including "The Oxford Handbook on the Use of Force in International Law" (2015).

Advice for the Class of 2018: Think concretely about what you want to do. Don't let uncertainty stop you. And don't hesitate to make mistakes, you have plenty of time to correct them. Learn languages. Seriously, learn languages, this is basically your last real opportunity to do so. Talk to people, find mentors. Most of us are totally willing; most people like to talk. And if we're not, screw it, we probably weren't worth talking to anyway. But you won't learn much about any job from books. You'll learn far more about the jobs you want (or think you want) from talking to people who do them, or do something in that field.

**Mentor
Index**

Dr. Ellen S. Marmur '91 [LinkedIn](#)

Dermatologic Surgeon/Cosmic Derm, Marmur Medical
New York

Major at Vassar: Philosophy

Advanced Degree: MD, Albert Einstein College of Medicine



Dr. Ellen Marmur is a leading dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon and Founder of Marmur Medical in New York City. She is a recognized and admired expert in skin cancer diagnosis and surgery, Mohs surgery reconstructive surgery, cosmetic surgery, and women's health dermatology. In addition to her private practice, Dr. Marmur is an Associate Clinical Professor in both the Department of Dermatology and the Department of Genetics & Genomic Research at The Mount Sinai Hospital. In 2014, Dr. Marmur started Skin Cancer, Take a Hike!® and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise awareness about skin cancer. Today, the initiative has grown into a world wide effort (to participate, please visit <https://www.aad.org/SCTAH>). Dr. Marmur is the recipient of the City of Hope's prestigious Spirit of Life humanitarian award in 2015. She also donates trees in honor of her patients and others to reduce our carbon footprint.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Vassar College provided such a fun, creative, energetic, and diverse environment to study esoteric, abstract ideas that it truly elevated my own expectations for myself for my life and career. My advice to students is to take advantage of being together. Talk to each other about your beliefs and thoughts. Meet with professors frequently and discuss your ideas. Learn to speak up, learn to overcome shyness, learn to lead others with your ideas, because your ideas are worthy. Once you learn these skills, you will become a leader in any field you enter.

John McIlwain P'18

Vice President for Advancement, Aspire

Chicago, Illinois

Undergraduate Major: Political Science, History, Rutgers University

Advanced Degree: MDiv, Chicago Theological Seminary



As VP for Advancement at Aspire, John McIlwain has exceeded fundraising goals year after year, successfully launched a new look and web presence for the brand, and established a culture of collaboration and creativity that has made Aspire one of "Chicago's Best and Brightest Companies to Work For®." Prior to joining Aspire, John was the Vice President of Development for Urban Innovations, a real estate investment company. John honed his business and negotiation skills at Jones Lang LaSalle and Cushman & Wakefield in new business development. John began his professional career as a minister in the UCC. Ordained in 1992, John spearheaded a community wide movement that gave rise to a comprehensive Human Rights Ordinance.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Every day of the year, people are hired because of their experience; and every day of the year people are let go because of their fit. It is important to know the culture and to confirm that it is the right fit for you. When you are interviewing, keep in mind that you are not only selling yourself, but you are also buying something; every company has its own culture and that culture contributes to or detracts from its success. You should be asking questions about the company culture; the strengths and weaknesses of the leaders; how managers handle conflict; and how your success will be measured. You will want to pay attention to those responses to affirm that this company is a good fit for you.



Kary McIlwain P'18
Marketing Vice President,
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
 Chicago, Illinois
Undergraduate Major: Journalism, Bradley University
Advanced Degree: MS, Northwestern University

As a capstone to a successful 25 plus year career in advertising, including as President and CEO of Y&R Chicago, Ms. McIlwain is starting her next chapter in non-profit marketing. As Head of Marketing for Lurie Children's, she is responsible for the marketing P&L, which includes digital, event and traditional marketing and a team of marketing professionals responsible for raising the awareness, reputation and reach of this world-class institution. She is a member of the Economics Club of Chicago and The Chicago Network, and serves on the boards of The Red Cross, United Way Leadership Council, and several other community and civic organizations.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Be You. Authenticity always eventually wins. Never try to be the person you think we're looking for. Your job is not just to find a job, but to find a place where you fit and will feel valued. You have to show up every day. You don't want to have to fake it for 52 weeks! This whole job search thing is a two-way street. You have to find a place that wants you and where you feel you can shine. The only way to do that is let the real you shine throughout the process. Find your voice, hone your story - but make certain it is truly your voice and uniquely your story. No company is looking for a persona. We want to hire people. Unique individuals who add to the quilt that is our brand, and our company. Be you and it'll be amazing how true connections happen!



Daniel McPhee '10 [LinkedIn](#)
Executive Director, Urban Design Forum
 New York
Major at Vassar: Urban Studies

Daniel McPhee is Executive Director of the Urban Design Forum, an independent membership organization that convenes leaders in urban planning, design and development to debate the defining issues facing New York City and our urbanizing world. As Executive Director, he works with the Board of Directors to present programming on issues like community development, historic preservation, housing, open space, resiliency, and transportation. In recent years, he has led inquiries into the redevelopment of American public housing, the mass urbanization of China, and the future of urban mobility. He is also the editor of the Forum's publications, including Next New York: 40 Ideas for the Future of the Built Environment and the Urban Design Review, which he edited from 2010 to 2013. Prior to his work with the Forum, he worked briefly as a community planner in San Francisco.

Advice for the Class of 2018: It can be tough to get started in architecture and planning without an advanced degree. If you're considering a career in design, look for marketing or communications positions at leading design firms. If you're considering a career in planning, look into business improvement districts, parks conservancies, and city agencies like housing and transportation. And get involved with your local design & urbanism organizations! Many organizations host young member programs like tours and cocktail hours.

Scott Mendelsohn '93 [LinkedIn](#)

**Senior Director for Work Readiness,
NYC Department of Education**
New York
Major at Vassar: English



Scott Mendelsohn is Senior Director for Work Readiness for the NYC Department of Education, supporting and advocating for experiential learning and work experience as key components of a student's high school education. This encompasses project-based learning as connecting the classroom with work environments, service learning, mentoring, and internships as vehicles to help students develop a professional identity, build relationships, and identify a line of sight for their future that can inform their college and career choices. Prior to joining the Department of Education, Scott worked in talent management consulting, developing career development programs for the Manpower group of companies, and doing strategic consulting with non-profits and small businesses. Prior to his career in business and education, Scott spent 10 years as a professional actor and choral singer.

Advice for the Class of 2018: We learn who we are...by testing reality, not by looking inside. We discover the true possibilities by doing - trying out new activities, reaching out to new groups, finding new role models, and reworking our story as we tell it to those around us. To launch ourselves anew, we need to get out of our heads. We need to act. – Hermania Ibarra, “Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career”

Neile Miller '79

**Principal, Strategic Associates LLC;
CEO, Ultra High Materials**
Washington, D.C.
Major at Vassar: Political Science
Advanced Degree: MSFS, Georgetown University



Neile Miller is the principal of Strategic Associates, an advisory and consulting practice focused on helping clients lead and manage through periods of strategic change. She is also the CEO of Ultra High Materials, an early-stage company specializing in innovative concrete products. Previously, she held positions in the federal government, at both the US Department of Energy and the White Office of Management and Budget. Nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the US Senate in 2010, Neile served as the acting Undersecretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and as the Principal Deputy Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, an agency within the U.S. DOE responsible for overseeing the nation's nuclear security complex. Previously, she was the DOE budget director, responsible for managing the agency's \$30 billion annual budget. She also held several senior management positions in the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy. At OMB, she was first the program examiner for radioactive waste programs and later the senior examiner for nuclear security programs. She started her career at the Congressional Research Service and also worked in Paris as a policy officer in the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Know yourself. Jobs are not only about subject matter but about what you do every day. The more you understand what you actually want to be doing; what plays to your strengths, what does not; what you already know and what you need to learn, the more likely you are going to have the career you actually want.



Tanya M. Odom '92

Global Consultant and Leadership Coach, Freelance

New York

Major at Vassar: Anthropology-Sociology

Advanced Degree: Ed.M., Harvard University

Tanya M. Odom is a consultant, coach, facilitator, teacher, writer, and thought leader. She has conducted hundreds of workshops for adults and youth around the world. She has worked as a consultant and facilitator focusing on areas including: Innovation and Creativity, Mindfulness, Girls' Leadership Development, Race/Racism, and more. Tanya's unique portfolio career has allowed her to work in the education, private sector/corporate, not-for-profit/NGO, law enforcement, and university/college arenas. She is the co-author of "Evaluation in the Field of Education for Democracy, Human Rights and Tolerance." Tanya is a contributor to the Huffington Post, and Tanya's work and commentary has also appeared in Diversity Woman Magazine and cnn.com. Tanya was named by Diversity Best Practices as "A Diversity Thought Leader to Follow on Twitter." Tanya is currently working on a book with civil rights pioneer Mel King.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Stay curious. Understand that "soft skills" are not really soft. Ask for feedback. Develop mentor/sponsor relationships. Ask questions AND learn to really listen. Develop an authentic network(s). Identify allies at work/home. Understand the importance of diversity and inclusion and emotional intelligence. Develop self compassion practices (early on).



Carol Ostrow '77 P'09 P'15

Producing Director, The Flea

New York

Major at Vassar: Drama

Advanced Degree: MFA, Yale Drama School

Carol is the Producing Director of The Flea, the award-winning off-off-Broadway theater located in Tribeca. She was Producing Director of New York's Classic Stage Company as well as the founder and Producing Director of The Powerhouse Theater at Vassar, which is proudly entering its 31st season. Carol has been an adjunct professor of theater at Vassar, Chatham College, and McGill University. Carol was newly elected to the Vassar Board of Trustees in 2015 and is also a new board member of The MacDowell Colony. In addition she is a member of the Board of Advisors to the Yale Drama School and an enthusiastic board member of LAVA, an acrobatic dance collective in Brooklyn. She is also a Wall Street Journal Expert, where she writes on entrepreneurs for the paper's online edition. For The Flea, Carol has produced 15 seasons of world premiere productions and has been responsible for the sound fiscal management and strategic growth of the theater's \$1.6 M budget, programs and initiatives. She is also overseeing The Flea's capital campaign that will result in a brand new three-theater performing arts center for The Flea scheduled to open in 2017.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Follow your heart but think with your head. There are a lot of options for your work life out there but you have to know what you want in order to go for it. Remember that life is long and careers take time to build. You cannot choose your boss, but if you find a good one, cling. Like a cherished teacher or coach, that person in charge can become a guide for life and a colleague too. Developing relationships is as important as building your resume.

Tracy Elise Poole '82

Assistant General Counsel, Johnson & Johnson

New Brunswick, New Jersey

Major at Vassar: Political Science

Advanced Degree: JD, Georgetown University



Upon graduation from Georgetown, Tracy Elise Poole was appointed an Assistant District Attorney in Brooklyn, New York where she prosecuted major crimes. She was next associated with Wood, Williams, Rafalsky & Harris and Arnelle & Hastie where she litigated business and commercial disputes. Next Ms. Poole joined Wall Street's Hughes, Hubbard & Reed where she handled business and corporate litigation. At Johnson & Johnson, she is responsible for a broad range of litigation for several operating companies, including advertising, corporate, employment and product liability matters. Ms. Poole also manages J&J's law department pro bono practice and she is an active member of several not-for-profit boards and organizations.

Advice for the Class of 2018: No matter what your career aspirations are, be fearless...not reckless. Fearless means having the courage and confidence to follow your dreams, to trust your instincts and to set high goals and standards for yourself. It means pursuing what makes you happy despite various voices that may try to discourage you along the way. Fearless is knowing that each challenge carries a valuable lesson for your continued development and growth. Reckless means failing to be strategic. Reckless means forging ahead while ignoring constructive feedback and signals along the way. The difference between fearlessness and recklessness is nuanced and can be tough to distinguish. But that's life...so settle in and brave it!

Tara Pyle '06 [LinkedIn](#)

Global Marketing Director, L'Oreal USA

New York

Major at Vassar: Art History

Advanced Degree: MBA, Dartmouth College



Tara is a Global Marketing Director at L'Oreal, where she oversees brand management for the essie professional nail brand. She is responsible for global brand strategy and new product launches. She works with her greater brand team on digital marketing, public relations, product development, and educating salon professionals. She has worked at L'Oreal since 2012 following receiving her MBA at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. While at Vassar, she studied Art History. This interest led her to start her career at the Center for Architecture in NYC, a gallery and event space. During her 3 years at the Center, she discovered marketing when she launched the institution's first advertising campaign, leading her to apply to business school.

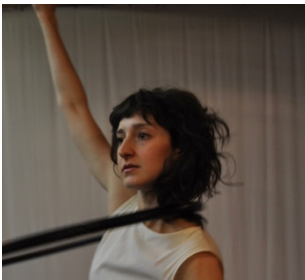
Advice for the Class of 2018: What do you enjoy the most about your life at Vassar? - is it a certain class, a club activity, organizing events, or helping someone with a project? Figure out why you enjoy these things and use those insights to translate into career prospects. For your first jobs/internships: show up ready to work hard and pitch in on the "grunt work", but always be curious about how the organization works, what the business challenges are, and how you can help add value. Don't be afraid to ask thoughtful questions. Your liberal arts education is a major asset. Don't underplay it! You may need to work harder at the beginning to learn technical skills, but your communication and critical thinking will take you far.



Margery Remler '80 P'14 P'18
Senior VP Investment Counselor, HSBC Bank
 New York
Major at Vassar: Hispanic Studies

Margie Remler has worked in the financial service industry for over thirty years. She began her career working at Chase, after first completing their intensive training program. She is currently a Senior Vice President Investment Advisor/ Counselor for Latin American high net worth clients at HSBC Manhattan. Margie continues to travel throughout Latin America for her job, which makes her knowledge and mastery in the Spanish language a definite advantage. Her bilingual ability is utilized on a daily basis. It is important to keep in mind that while studying at Vassar, Margie did not foresee a career in finance and originally expected to pursue a career in education.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Take as varied a curriculum as you can handle at Vassar – this is the time to sample a variety of opportunities before you start to focus in on a career path. Don't rush into finding a job and scoping out a series of internships too soon. People want you to take advantage of your interests and opportunities and don't expect you to have it all figured out just yet!



Gabrielle Revlock '02
Dance/Choreographer, Freelance
 New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Major at Vassar: Art History

Gabrielle Revlock is an award-winning dancer/choreographer based in NYC. She is the recipient of a Fresh Tracks Residency at New York Live Arts, LAB Fellowship through FringeArts in Philadelphia, and a 2015 Independence Foundation Fellowship. Her duo work with Nicole Bindler has been called “poignant, wild, hilarious, and generous” (Culturebot) and conquered the 2011 A.W.A.R.D. Show: Philadelphia by terminating the contest and winning a finalist prize. Her work has been presented in Seattle, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, Tokyo, Yekaterinburg, Budapest, The Hague, and Provincetown among others. Support has been received from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, The Puffin Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, SCUBA National Touring Network for Dance, Omi International Arts Center, Philadelphia/Poznań Artist Exchange and the Susan Hess Choreographers' Project. As a dancer she has worked for Lucinda Childs, Susan Rethorst and now Jane Comfort & Company. Interested in bridging experimentation and populism, she created the online video [So You Think You Can't Understand Contemporary Dance?](#) which has been translated into five languages. More at [GabrielleRevlock.com](#).

Advice for the Class of 2018: Establish savings early. Your income may fluctuate dramatically year to year. Be reliable and easy to work with. Everyone gets rejected. Rejection is not an estimation of your worth-- it's just the decision of those people at that time. Plus, there may have been one person on the panel that liked what you did and that will be helpful in the future. Practice writing simply and clearly about your work.

Nicole Savage '08

**Program Coordinator for College Readiness,
University of the District of Columbia Community College**
Washington, D.C.

Major at Vassar: Urban Studies

Advanced Degree: MPA, Syracuse University



After graduating from Vassar College in 2008, Nicole Savage moved home for 5 months before moving back to Poughkeepsie. She worked as the Co-Chair for Multicultural Recruitment in Vassar's Office of Admission from 2009 until 2013. During her time as an admissions officer, she worked to increase diversity on campus, sat on the Sexual Assault Response Team and collaborated to bring initiatives like the Transitions program to fruition. In 2013 she left Vassar to pursue her Master's in Public Administration at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. She currently works as the Program Coordinator for College Readiness at the University of the District of Columbia Community College in Washington, DC and as a remote admissions counselor for AIM Education Services of Kingston, Jamaica.

Advice for the Class of 2018: You don't have to figure it all out right now. Know that you will continue to grow and change after you leave Vassar. I acknowledge that for many of you this will be easier said than done. However, taking the time to see the value in the present and learn what you can from it is a worthwhile exercise. This is not to say that you shouldn't plan and prepare for your future. Just know that there is so much ahead of you. Take your time and enjoy figuring it out.

Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque '06 [LinkedIn](#)

**Global Advisor, Community Engagement,
United Nations Office for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs**

New York

Major at Vassar: International Studies

Advanced Degree: MSc, London School of Economics and
Political Science



Alexandra has over 12 years of experience working as a humanitarian aid worker, media development specialist, journalist and filmmaker. She co-founded the NGO Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) in 2002, which trains journalists on reporting on human rights in Africa, the Middle East and Canada. She also worked for Article 19, BBC Media Action, and the UN peacekeeping operations. Alexandra has worked in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Iraq and the Philippines. She is now working for the UN coordination body for humanitarian responses, looking at ensuring that affected communities have access to information, communication and are able to make decisions in humanitarian responses. At Vassar, Alexandra hosted a women and jazz radio show on WVKR.

Advice for the Class of 2018: I did my Junior Year Abroad in Kenya and it most certainly changed my life forever – I would highly recommend JYA, especially in countries beyond Europe... it's important to be challenged. Vassar offers so many opportunities and fellowships, make sure you take advantage of it all. Follow your gut, no matter what! If you have an idea, a passion, and everyone advises you against it, but you really believe in it... go for it. I usually tend to advise against unpaid internships (unless you get a course credit or else)... but we can discuss that in person.



Eve E. Slater, MD '67

Professor of Clinical Medicine, Columbia University

New York

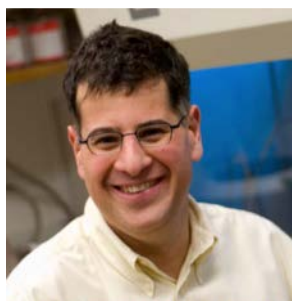
Major at Vassar: Chemistry

Advanced Degree: Columbia University

Dr. Eve E. Slater is currently Professor of Clinical Medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, where she has taught for over 35 years. She is board certified in internal medicine and cardiology and a fellow of the American College of Cardiology. Eve received her residency and fellowship training at the Massachusetts General Hospital where she was the first woman Chief Resident in Medicine, and later led the Hypertension Unit, as Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. She served as Assistant Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and spent over 19 years with Merck and Co. as Executive Director of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and later, Senior Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Development, and SVP of External Policy. She serves on many biotechnology and non-profit health policy boards and was named to the Vassar Board in 2015.

Mentor Index

Advice for the Class of 2018: You are at an exciting time in your careers, with unparalleled resources at your disposal. Please try to use this time to find a career that fills you with passion – if you came to college with a preconceived notion of what that might be, then challenge it. If you cannot seem to find it, become single-minded in trying to recognize what within you provides joy in its exploration. Vassar College indeed provided me this opportunity. No, I had no idea that I wanted to become a physician (in fact it was very far from my mind during much of my time), but I found it through the courses that I took and the inspiration provided by their professors.



Michael Starnbach '87

Professor of Microbiology & Immunobiology,

Harvard Medical School

Boston

Major at Vassar: Biology

Advanced Degree: PhD, Stanford University

Research in Dr. Starnbach's lab uses a combination of cellular and molecular approaches in the analysis of host responses to bacterial pathogens. Many virulence factors have been identified that allow bacteria to survive and replicate within the mammalian host and often within host cells. Dr. Starnbach has focused on the consequences of these survival strategies, specifically asking how bacterial virulence factors subvert or inhibit host responses allowing for chronic infection. His lab has led the efforts to dissect antigen specific T cell responses to chronic bacterial infection, including Chlamydia trachomatis. Working at the interface of bacterial pathogenesis and cellular immunology reflects his prior training, with graduate work focused on bacterial virulence determinates and postdoctoral work in T cell immunology. Dr. Starnbach pursued postdoctoral research at the University of Washington, applying modern immunological techniques to the problem of bacterial infection.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Your time at Vassar provides an opportunity to explore a variety of academic interests. Enjoy stretching your mind broadly during your time here.

The most interesting career pursuits are multidisciplinary – it is difficult for you to realize now how a diverse knowledge base will serve you well in the future.

Eileen Strauss '76 [LinkedIn](#)

President (retired), BizIntell, Inc.

Solon, Ohio

Major at Vassar: Chemistry



Eileen Strauss' career has spanned over 35 years with the chemical and allied industries markets, with experience base in both the consultant and industrial arenas. She has held positions involving direct operating and management with P&L responsibilities, and corporate staff positions involving commercial/new product development, strategic planning, industrial marketing research/competitive intelligence, and project management. Companies at which she worked during her career included SRI International, Durkee Industrial Corporation, The Lubrizol Corporation, and BizIntell, Inc. (her own consulting company). Her varied background enabled her to pursue projects with an understanding from diverse perspectives.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Options for careers with a science/technical degree exist beyond the “traditional” paths of med school, grad school in your major area, or work in a tech position at a company – it all depends on your interests and passions! With your Vassar education and degree in the sciences, you can pursue various paths that aren't necessarily immersed in your technical field – there is always the business side of the sciences, writing about science, starting your own venture, etc. You have the technical vocabulary to understand the tech people, but you don't have to be a techie yourself. Also, remember that networking is extremely important no matter what you decide to do – talking and working with people will help further your pursuits and knowledge. To help maintain and grow your valuable professional network, as well as stay current in related subject areas, you should also join relevant professional organizations at the beginning of your career and stay active within them as the years pass.

Leighton Suen '14 [LinkedIn](#)

ESL Teacher, Dorcas Center

Brooklyn, New York

Major at Vassar: English, Russian Studies

Advanced Degree: MA, Teachers College, Columbia University



Leighton Suen is currently in his second and final year of graduate study at Teachers College, Columbia University. After graduating from Vassar, he went directly for his Master's in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, including initial certification for teaching grades K-12. He currently teaches English to Chinese-speaking adults at Dorcas Center in Brooklyn. While at Vassar, Leighton was involved in the Let's Get Ready and VELLOP programs at Poughkeepsie High School. He was also President of RunVassar and a News Editor for the Miscellany News. With the help of his professors and generous scholarships, he was able to attend summer study abroad programs in Qingdao, China and Moscow, Russia. Next fall, Leighton hopes to begin teaching English full-time in a public school in NYC.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Try to accomplish something major while you're at Vassar. Find professors who believe in you and who want to help you. Never jeopardize your grades and your future for other people. Make an appointment with CDO when you're doing interviews, resumes, or statements of purpose. Organization is the key to survival. Lastly, remember to relax and don't burn yourself out. A few years from now, you won't remember the stressful all-nighters. You'll want to remember the good times you spent hanging out with friends, doing all the fun things that you can only do during your four years at Vassar. Aim high, do what you love, try your best, and you'll be fine.



Andrew Susser '86

Portfolio Manager, Mackay Shields High Yield Group

New York

Major at Vassar: Chemistry

Advanced Degree: MBA, JD, University of Pennsylvania

Andrew Susser is the Portfolio Manager for Mackay Shields High Yield Group, which manages over \$20 billion of high yield bonds, including the MainStay High Yield Corporate Bond Fund. Prior to joining MacKay Shields in 2006, he was a Portfolio Manager with GoldenTree Asset Management. Previously, he was a Managing Director and Head of High Yield Bond Research at Banc of America Securities covering the gaming, lodging and leisure sectors. From 1999 to 2004, Andrew was named to the Institutional Investor All-America Fixed Income Research Team; from 2002 to 2004, he was ranked by Institutional Investor as the No. 1 analyst in the high yield sector. Andrew also worked as a Fixed Income Analyst for Salomon Brothers, as a Senior Analyst at Moody's Investors Service and as a Market Analyst and Institutional Trading Liaison for Merrill Lynch Capital Markets. He began his career as a Corporate Finance and M&A Attorney at Shearman & Sterling in their New York office.



Minerva Tantoco '86

Chief Technology Officer, City of New York

New York

Major at Vassar: Philosophy

Ms. Minerva Tantoco is the first-ever Chief Technology Officer of NYC. With 30 years in technology, she started her first software company in 1985, and recently served as CTO of global financial services firm UBS and Merrill Lynch. Ms. Tantoco is a strong advocate for encouraging more women to become involved with technology, and believes that technology can be used to spread knowledge and improve education, especially in underserved communities, and that artificial intelligence applied to the massively growing amount of systems, data, and interconnections offers capabilities of which we have yet to dream.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Vassar taught me the value of using every moment to my advantage even if their usefulness isn't immediately clear. Vassar's Independent Major allowed me to explore connections between my passions and disparate disciplines and led me to realize that the collision of ideas is where innovation happens. This discovery can work for you, too, as long as you're not rigid in thinking. Be open to seeming purposelessness. As Steve Jobs said, "You can't connect the dots looking forward you can only connect them looking backwards." If something appeals to you because of the pleasure of it, do it! You might find that those are the things that connect you to your future. These connections include the people you meet at Vassar. Every major event in my adult life can be traced to people I connected with from my time here. So, remember to treat people as the dots you'll connect from your past into your future.

Mentor
Index

Dave Tobias '83 P'16

**Director, Land Acquisition Program,
NYC Department of Environmental Protection**
New York

Major at Vassar: Biopsychology

Advanced Degree: MS, Yale University



After working in biomedical research for several years after Vassar, Dave decided to enter the environmental field and received a Master's degree from Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. He was immediately hired by The Nature Conservancy, where he developed and implemented fundraising and conservation plans to protect endangered species and habitats in New York State. Following seven years of on-the-job training in real estate, resource management, grant-writing, and program development, Dave was hired by New York City in 1996 to build a Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program, with a budget of \$600 million and the goal of protecting as much sensitive land as possible in NYC's 2,000-square-mile watershed. Since 1996 he and a talented team have developed a diverse suite of initiatives whose goal is to permanently protect land and water for the long-term benefit of 9 million people. Dave looks forward to seeing many young Vassar colleagues at future environmental conferences, where he expects they will make tremendous contributions in helping to create a more sustainable world.

Advice for the Class of 2018: DON'T STRESS!! Easy to say, hard to live by, but it's really an important lesson that you'll learn one way or another, so why not learn it early?! Work hard, play hard, follow your passions, and just don't sweat what you can't control. Stress will sneak up on you and slowly build over the years, so learn to dispense with it now while you're young, in your work and personal life, and you'll benefit for a long, long time.

Dini von Mueffling '88 P'17 [LinkedIn](#)

Principal and Founder, Dini von Mueffling Communications
New York

Major at Vassar: English



Dini von Mueffling is the founder of Dini von Mueffling Communications, a public relations firm in New York City. DVMC works with clients in numerous fields including technology, media, business, real estate, design, fashion, non-profits, as well as represents high profile individuals. Von Mueffling has expertise in launching companies, branding, reputation and crisis management, media strategy and event execution. Among the firm's recent work is the representation of Sandy Hook Promise, the national gun violence prevention founded by families of victims of the massacre at Sandy Hook and the orchestration of Monica Lewinsky's return to public life and her anti-bullying campaign. Von Mueffling is also the co-founder of Love Heals, the Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education, which is the leading provider of HIV/AIDS education to the youth of New York City which has educated over 700,000 young people in person about HIV/AIDS since 1992. Previously, von Mueffling was a journalist and is the author of two non-fiction books.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Don't discount any opportunity. They don't always present themselves in the most expected ways, but each one has something valuable to offer. The only truly bad experience you can have is one you don't learn from. Be open to a different path from the one you had planned for yourself; you may just find it takes you exactly where you were meant to be.



Robert Walker '79 [LinkedIn](#)
**Director, Division of Clinical Studies,
Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority**
Washington, D.C.
Major at Vassar: English
Advanced Degree: MD, University of Maryland

Robert Walker is the director of the division of clinical studies in the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response within the US Department of Health and Human Services. BARDA's mission is to improve the nation's preparedness for public health catastrophes by supporting the development of drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics. Many of the products developed under BARDA's sponsorship are intended for the Strategic National Stockpile. Previously Bob was chief medical officer at Nuron Biotech, vice president at Aeras, a not-for-profit focused on the developing world, vice president at MedImmune, a biopharmaceutical company, clinical investigator at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and attending physician in Critical Care Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. He attended the University of Maryland Medical School, and did his internal medicine training at George Washington University and pulmonary and critical care training at the University of Pennsylvania.

Advice for the Class of 2018: Most great work these days is done by teams instead of an individual. Your future success will likely depend on the engagement of others. Build your skillset for effective collaboration and strengthen your techniques for motivating team members. Learn from your unsuccessful collaborations. Remember also to mentor your juniors. You can start now, and the benefits will surprise you.



Dimitri Wijesinghe '13 [LinkedIn](#)
Web Developer, iVantage
Needham, Massachusetts
Major at Vassar: Computer Science

When Dimitri first arrived at Vassar, the school seemed like a completely different planet. But over the years he came to love it like a second home. Dimitri majored in Computer Science but also took classes in Film, Music and Philosophy. While at Vassar he was a student fellow, a Computer Science lab coach and a Computer Science researcher. Nothing fully prepares you for adult life (and how early you have to wake up), but he definitely believes his time at Vassar gave him many of the skills he relies on as an adult, both academically and personally. Dimitri now works as a Web Developer outside of Boston, where he gets to put his Computer Science classroom skills to good use. He is still inseparable from many of his Vassar friends and is very glad he chose to attend Vassar.

Advice for the Class of 2018: First of all, take advantage of what Vassar has to offer. That means studying hard and putting in your best effort in the classroom. It also means exploring outside of the classroom. Vassar is full of people with very different lives and opinions from yours. Try and get to know a few of them, even if you're generally anti-social. Some of my closest friends from Vassar are people I had nothing in common with (and you'll find that in the real world as well). But most importantly, relax. You might struggle in the classroom. You might struggle with your personal life. You might worry that you're the typical "Vassar kid." You are going to be fine. So take the time to relax, make friends and be an annoying college student. Don't worry about life after college either; it's nowhere near as bad as it sounds.

**Mentor
Index**

Nikki (Rosard) Wiles '08 [LinkedIn](#)

Senior Technical Project Manager, Vimeo

New York

Major at Vassar: Computer Science

Nikki has been working in the tech industry for over seven years and is particularly passionate about organizing everything and helping people work more efficiently and effectively. At Vimeo, the high-quality video hosting and sharing site/community, she focuses on keeping back-end and infrastructure projects on track. Previously, she worked in software QA, performing both automated and manual testing at Microsoft, LimeWire, and ChallengePost (the startup now known as DevPost). While at Vassar, Nikki worked as a lab coach for the Computer Science department and stage-managed a handful of shows – it seems she was destined to manage projects for a living.



Advice for the Class of 2018: Short-term: If you have the opportunity to study abroad, absolutely do it! It's an amazing opportunity to learn about other cultures and see the world, and it's much more difficult to do that kind of travel when you have a full-time job. Long-term: When you're job searching, remember that you don't have to commit to anything forever. A job is just for now – use it as an opportunity to figure out what you do and don't like, and you can move more in the direction of what you do like when you're ready to find your next one.

Kenneth Wong '07 [LinkedIn](#)

Vice President, Centre Lane Partners, LLC

New York

Major at Vassar: Economics, Chinese

Kenneth is a Vice President at Centre Lane Partners, a private equity fund focused on acquiring middle market companies in North America across a variety of industries. As a vice president, Kenneth is responsible for identifying and then acquiring potential acquisitions as well as monitoring the investments while under Centre Lane ownership. Prior to joining Centre Lane, Kenneth was an associate at Monomoy Capital Partners, another private equity fund focused on owning and operating middle market companies. Kenneth started his career in finance as an investment banker with Bear Stearns in its Leveraged Finance group.



Advice for the Class of 2018: Focus on developing the ability to articulate your thoughts clearly and concisely on paper and through conversation. Don't always say the first thing that comes to mind – take a step back and think through (even if only for a minute) your responses. Do your homework and know your material. Don't be afraid to let others know that you don't understand or have questions. Manage expectations and strive to exceed them.



Nicole Wong '15 [LinkedIn](#)

High Risk Case Manager, Family Services, Inc.

Poughkeepsie, New York

Major at Vassar: Sociology, English

Nicole Wong is the High Risk Case Manager at Domestic Violence Services of Family Services, Inc. Nicole works with victims of domestic violence who are at the greatest risk for lethality from their abusers. She coordinates a multidisciplinary team, the Dutchess County High Risk Response Team, made up of representatives from the District Attorney's Office, Grace Smith House, Inc., the New York State Police, and more in order to better assist victims of domestic violence in staying safe, to ensure offenders are held accountable for their actions, and to enhance the community and system response to domestic violence in Dutchess County. In addition to intensive safety planning with her high risk clients and constant advocacy with the agencies in the community, Nicole provides services to her clients through the 24-hour hotline, one on one counseling, and court advocacy.

**Mentor
Index**

Advice for the Class of 2018: Find the groups on campus that make you feel comfortable, happy, and the most fulfilled. Hopefully, the people you meet on campus and the experiences you have at Vassar will help you figure out the type of people you want to surround yourself with and the type of work you want to do. Take advantage of the resources on campus that can help fine-tune your interests and find opportunities to test those interests out. Experiment with different types of internships or volunteer opportunities to see what you enjoy. It's okay to change your mind! When I was a sophomore at Vassar, I would not have expected to be in the position that I am in now.



Dana Reed Younger '75 P'17 [LinkedIn](#)

Chief Renewable Energy Specialist,

International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group

Washington, D.C.

Major at Vassar: Science, Technology & Society

Advanced Degree: MA, George Washington University

Mr. Dana R. Younger is Chief Renewable Energy Specialist of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank Group. Mr. Younger has helped IFC finance utility-scale, grid-tied ground-mount and rooftop solar PV projects totaling >1,400 MW. He also helped mobilize financing for three concentrating solar power (CSP) projects in South Africa totaling 250 MW. He has participated in mobilizing financing for >3,000 MW of wind projects in emerging market countries as well as many other biomass, geothermal and hydro projects. He has helped build IFC's portfolio of clean energy private equity funds totaling >\$500 million in 24 funds and has been involved in formation of the recently launched IFC Catalyst Fund of Funds for climate related investments. Mr. Younger acts as lead business developer for large grid-tied renewable energy transactions on a global basis.

Advice for the Class of 2018: As a liberal arts college, Vassar offers a superb environment in which to sharpen your interests in the intersection between science, technology, and society/public policy. I recommend you build a base of experience in a particular field of your greatest interest while also developing a well-rounded course of study in other topics of collateral interest. Also, begin to focus on organizations that offer broad coverage of topics that are of greatest interest. Conduct informational interviews and seek out internships in those organizations to confirm they offer the kind of work experience and career path that you seek. Go to graduate school only as absolutely necessary to advance your career.

Lee Zalben '95 [LinkedIn](#)

Founder & President, Peanut Butter & Co.

New York

Major at Vassar: Urban Studies

Advanced Degree: MS, Pace University



Lee is the Founder and President of Peanut Butter & Co. While at Vassar, Lee served as Head Usher on the Daisy Chain and, during his senior year, was co-chair of the class gift and business manager of the Vassarion. Lee went on to work in advertising and publishing while concurrently earning a Master's degree in Publishing from Pace University. In 1998, Lee opened the Peanut Butter & Co. sandwich shop and, in 2003, expanded into retail distribution. His line of ten different varieties of all natural peanut butter is now sold at over 15,000 supermarkets and natural food stores throughout the US and Canada. Over the years, Lee has hired numerous Vassar students and grads as interns and employees. Lee sits on the American Express OPEN Customer Advisory Board, serves on the Supplier Marketing Council of the Specialty Food Association (formerly the NASFTI), and is a member of YPO.

Advice for the Class of 2018: A successful career can be like a thrilling adventure story, with lots of twists and turns and opportunities to overcome challenges and be a hero! Great companies will give you the chance to do meaningful work, learn and grow, and change the world through your service. Be prepared to apprentice with a master, learn a craft (or two or three) and look forward to sharing your experiences with the next generation.

Resumes

Strong resumes are targeted to a specific opportunity and bring out a candidate's key credentials, skills, interests, and accomplishments. Generally limited to one page in length, a resume should provide contact information, summarize your educational and professional history, and highlight additional skill sets and leadership capabilities.

To get help with your resume, drop by the CDO at any time between 2 and 4pm, Monday through Friday. The [CDO's Resume Writing and Job Search Correspondence Guide](#) provides useful tips on format and content, and provides examples of successful resumes.

Cover Letters

Cover letters are persuasive documents that highlight a candidate's skills, knowledge of the employer, and ability to contribute to the organization. Simply put, a cover letter is an opportunity for you to interpret your resume and highlight why you are a strong candidate. The [CDO's Resume Writing and Job Search Correspondence Guide](#) provides useful tips on format and content, and provides examples of successful cover letters.

Interviews

Interviews are two-way conversations by which employers evaluate a candidate's skills, motivation, goals, and personality. Usually granted to applicants who stand out on paper, interviews help an employer determine whether an individual would be a good fit for their organization. Interviews also allow applicants to get insight into potential workplaces. To learn more about polishing your interviewing skills, schedule a mock interview with a career counselor. You can also practice your interviewing skills through recording and viewing a real-time virtual mock interview on [CareerBeam](#).

Networking and Informational Interviews

One of the best ways to explore career options and plan your job search is to talk directly with people who work in fields that interest you. Informational interviewing adds a dynamic, personalized dimension to your career research – and can help you approach your internship in a strategic, focused manner. Vassar alumnae/i have a strong track record of helping current students advance their career goals. Use our networking resources (on the opposite page) to learn more about a specific industry, occupation, or organization, get advice on how to “break into” or advance in a given industry, or explore graduate and professional school programs.

Thank You Notes

Thank you notes are expected by employers and networking contacts as an appropriate method to extend your appreciation for an individual's time and attention. It is also a strategic way to emphasize your professionalism and differentiate yourself. Always follow up with a thank you note (or email) after every professional interaction.

** To access links, please visit the electronic program booklet at <http://careers.vassar.edu/explore-and-plan/sig-programs/sophomores.html>

Career
Guidebook

Definitions

The Career Development Office

The Career Development Office (CDO) helps students and alumnae/i envision and realize a meaningful life after Vassar. We support members of the Vassar community as they explore their interests, define their career goals, and seek their next opportunity for personal growth and professional development. Located in Main-South (Room 170), CDO staff can help you find internship opportunities, review resumes and cover letters, network efficiently, and prepare for interviews. The office also offers career assessment and graduate/law school advising services, hosts regular workshops and on-campus recruiting events, brings employers and graduate schools to campus, and administers internship funding. To take advantage of these resources, schedule a half-hour appointment with a career counselor – or visit the office between 2 and 4pm, Monday through Friday, for a drop-in.

Online Internship Resources

The CDO operates, subscribes to, and recommends a number of useful online resources for internship searching. We encourage you to begin your internship search with the CDO's Vassar-connected resources. Available solely to the Vassar community and updated daily, [VCLink](#) is a database of job and internship opportunities for which employers explicitly seek Vassar students. Accessible through VCLink, the Liberal Arts Career Network ([LACN](#)) and the Nationwide Internship Consortium ([NIC](#)) draw upon opportunities connected to 40+ selective liberal arts colleges across the nation. Aside from highlighting specific opportunities, a number of our subscription resources provide informational (often industry and company-specific) content and provide advice on finding internship opportunities outside the US. For a full list of recommended online resources, consult the [Internship Resource Directory](#). Mentors: If you wish to post an internship opportunity, please contact the CDO directly at cdo@vassar.edu.

Networking Tools

Sophomore Career Connections is not your only opportunity to network with members of the Vassar community. As a student or alumnae/i, you have access to the Vassar network through a handful of convenient online tools. [The Alumnae/i Directory](#), operated by the Office of Alumnae/i Affairs and Development (OAAD), allows you to search for and (respectfully) contact nearly 40,000 Vassar graduates. Over 17,000 Vassar graduates currently use [LinkedIn](#); set up a free account to connect with people who inspire you! Finally, Vassar's growing [AlumniFire](#) network offers another way to identify and contact community members who are willing to help and advise current students.

Funding Opportunities

Many internship programs are unpaid or underpaid. To help make financially inaccessible opportunities a reality, the CDO administers a number of funds every year. Through the Internship Grant Fund (IGF), a need-sensitive program open to students from all class years, the CDO supports students participating in low-pay and unpaid summer internships. Whether you require assistance to cover rent for summer, or simply need a Metro Pass to get from your home to the office, consider applying to the IGF once rolling admissions open in March. Open to juniors only, the highly competitive Tananbaum Fellowship helps 20 juniors find their dream summer opportunity through comprehensive career coaching and a generous stipend. See the websites of the [CDO](#) and the [Office of Fellowships](#) for more information about these and other Vassar funding opportunities.

Notes

Notes

Notes



Office of Alumnae/i Affairs and Development
(OAAAD)

alums.vassar.edu
oaadweb@vassar.edu
(800) 443-8196

Career Development Office
(CDO)

careers.vassar.edu
cdo@vassar.edu
(845) 437-5285