Follow Your Dreams! But Really.

Rachel Bringewatt

Ashley Wilda

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/forum

Part of the Civic and Community Engagement Commons, Community-Based Learning Commons, Journalism Studies Commons, Nonfiction Commons, Other Arts and Humanities Commons, Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons, Photography Commons, and the Publishing Commons

Recommended Citation

This On Campus is brought to you for free and open access by UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Forum Magazine by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
Natalie Salim loves “the feeling of creating art” through her job as a professional photographer.

Follow Your Dreams! But Really.

Five recent Spider alums share insights about what they are doing post-college. →

BY RACHEL BRINGEWATT AND ASHLEY WILDA
AT THIS POINT IN OUR LIVES, many of us have heard the common advice, “Don’t be afraid to follow your dreams.” Many people may take this with a grain of salt. After all, it is hard to let go of the fear that your dream is unrealistic or likely to fall flat in the professional world. This train of thought is perhaps most prevalent among the seniors graduating this May. However, it is possible to not only follow your passions but also transform them into creative professional careers. If you are searching for inspiration, take a look at these five recent alums.

JAKE MONACO

GRADUATION YEAR: 2004
AREA OF STUDY: Composition and Music

JOB HIGHLIGHTS: Jake works as a composer. He has written music for several films and commercials, and he has also composed some TV and web pieces. He was a score producer for Disney’s hit movie Frozen and the 2013 film Runner Runner directed by Brad Furman. He also co-wrote the music for Obama’s 2012 re-election documentary video “The Road We’ve Traveled.” Jake is currently working on two animated TV shows: DinoTrux (produced by Dreamworks) and Be Cool Scooby Doo (produced by Warner Brothers Animation). Both are set to start airing on Netflix and Cartoon Network, respectively, in the fall.

FUN FACTS: Jake works from home, allowing him to spend time with his son, Tommy.

REFLECTIONS ON TIME AT UR: “Working in the music tech lab was a huge help, learning recording techniques, mixing, and quite a few different music programs. Ben Broening [a professor of music and accomplished composer] and the rest of the music department were extremely supportive in anything I proposed, whether related to recording a demo CD for my band in the lab or creating an independent study course.”

SYLVIE SOMERVILLE

GRADUATION YEAR: 2011
AREA OF STUDY: Mathematical Economics, Classical Civilization

JOB HIGHLIGHTS: Sylvie is a finance consultant with HOPE International in Malawi, an African country. HOPE is a Christian non-profit organization that focuses on helping natives of Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia achieve financial stability and education. During Sylvie’s term of studying abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland, she discovered her love for international development economics. Although she hates battling baboon spiders and catching malaria, Sylvie loves the incredible weather, birds, and people of Africa, and is excited to continue her work with HOPE.

FUN FACTS: The pace of life in Africa is much slower than that of America, and the people Sylvie knows, such as the local tailor, gardener, and carpenter, are essential to a normal life. Because of this slower lifestyle, her phone is vital for connectivity and a functioning life in Malawi.

REFLECTIONS ON TIME AT UR: “Don’t miss the opportunity to study and work abroad! Do both in your undergrad and make as many international student friends as you can. They have such great points of view and life experiences that we Americans can learn from.”

Omari Bailey

GRADUATION YEAR: 2012
AREA OF STUDY: Rhetoric and Communication Studies, Leadership Studies

JOB HIGHLIGHTS: Omari works in Los Angeles as an actor and hosts his own radio show called “On With Omari.” Omari and his producer are currently in the process of switching the radio show from a podcast to a video format which viewers can access via YouTube.

FUN FACTS: In sixth grade, Omari performed in his first play, performing Demetrius in Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In his free time, Omari also works as a waiter at various catering events (including the Oscars and MTV Music Awards).

REFLECTIONS ON TIME AT UR: “Take advantage of every opportunity the university provides. Follow your passion and your heart. Life is too short to follow a path you don’t really want to be on.”
NATALIE SALIM

GRADUATION YEAR: 2011
AREA OF STUDY: Biology, Art

JOB HIGHLIGHTS:
Natalie is a professional photographer who runs a private business, Natalie Michelle Photography. She discovered the true depth of her love of photography through her experience developing photos in UR’s darkroom in the Modlin Center for the Arts. When she traveled to the Florida Keys with her biology class, her passion for marine biology and underwater photography became clear. Although running her own business can be overwhelming at times, Natalie loves seeing her work appreciated and displayed on her clients’ walls. When asked about the most exciting part of her job, she said, “I love the feeling of creating art with my photography. It is exciting and terrifying to realize that my success is measured by the dedication and passion I have for my craft.”

FUN FACTS:
On her Florida Keys trip, Natalie collected more than 300 pictures, the beginning of her underwater photography obsession. She displays a sampling of her fantastic photographs on her blog, “Don’t Blink Photography,” on Tumblr.

REFLECTIONS ON TIME AT UR:
“Take advantage of everything University of Richmond has to offer. Find out what you love and throw yourself into it. There are so many opportunities I took that I am grateful for, but there are so many more that I wish I had known about and pursued while I had the opportunity. Enjoy the experience and don’t wish it away. Having a community and a home like you have for those four years on campus is something that I wish I could go back and appreciate even more than I did at the time. University of Richmond is a unique experience and it would be to your detriment not to take in everything it has to offer!”

Jake Mayers

GRADUATION YEAR: 2013
AREA OF STUDY: Rhetoric and Communication Studies

JOB HIGHLIGHTS:
Jake is a Minor League Baseball player currently playing for the Washington Nationals. While at UR, Jake planned to use his degree to play Major League Baseball and eventually turn his skills to coaching. When asked about the greatest challenges of his career, Jake listed the distance from his wife, Lauren Olszewski Mayers, the pressure to outperform other players, and the challenge to trust that “God is in full control and everything happens according to His plan.” When asked about the greatest pleasures in his career, he said, “I honestly don’t work in my career. What I mean by that is if you love what you do it’s never work but a full out enjoyment. Part of that is God making it apparent to me that I’m supposed to be in this game, and when you are pursuing God’s plan it is the most fulfilling experience you can have. Also, I’m getting paid to play a game, so, to me, nothing beats that.”

FUN FACTS:
Jake proposed to his wife on the pitcher’s mound at a UR home game in 2013.

REFLECTIONS ON TIME AT UR:
“The one thing I would say to Spiders is UR made me the person I am today. Everything I experienced there and learned has helped me in not only my career, but [in] my marriage and relationship with God. Never be afraid to go out and meet new people and learn about their life story. You may learn something that you can apply to your life.”