

Rebecca Nattress is a senior at the University of Wisconsin—Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Q) How did you first get interested in the graphic arts, or decide to major in graphic communications in school?

A) My mom worked at a printing company and my dad worked as a consultant for architects. So when I got to pick classes to take in high school, I picked the introductory graphics class because it was the perfect combination of my parent's careers.

Q) Did you take any courses in high school that were related to graphic communications, or that prepared you for your planned career?

A) I took the introductory graphics class my junior year of high school. I enjoyed it so much that I took the next class in the sequence, a class that was run like a printing business. We screen printed shirts and we designed and printed posters. Then we designed and printed/cut vinyl decals for student organizations, sports teams, and community businesses. Loving the classes I took in high school helped me decide on a career in the graphic communications industry. My graphics teacher in high school attended the University of Wisconsin—Stout, so I was carried to Stout thanks to my amazing graphics teacher.

Q) What course of studies are you taking now, or planning on taking, during the path of your school education?

*With my graduation coming in May, I am currently enrolled in the capstone classes here in the Cross-Media Graphics Management major at UW—Stout. I am working very hard as an editor on the semiannual edition of *Reddex*, the literary magazine written and produced solely by students in the program. I am also taking Organizational Leadership, Information Systems for Enterprise, and Senior Seminar.*

Looking to the Future

Q) Is there a particular area of the graphic communications field that is of special interest to you as you consider where you want to focus your future career on?

My fall semester co-op experience allowed me to delve into the digital marketing industry. I was a social media intern, as well as a search engine optimization intern. Because of what I learned from both departments, I am now extremely geared toward the digital marketing industry.

Q) What type of company would you like to work for after you graduate?

Content marketing is my true passion. I love to write, so a purely digital firm would probably not be the perfect fit for me. I'd really enjoy working for a company which has both a strong digital presence as well as a strong printed presence. That way I would be able to utilize my newfound skills in digital marketing, as well as cultivate my passion for writing. Overall, I would really thrive at a company that can give me experience in both the digital and print worlds.

Q) What do you think employers are looking for in today's workforce and current industry environment?

Based on my experience, industry professionals are not necessarily looking for experience, but rather the openness to learn. There aren't enough young professionals in the industry yet for companies to be picky

with who they hire. That does not mean that they take whoever is willing, but it is definitely not as competitive as in previous years to get a worthwhile job.

Q) Is there anything that you have found to be particularly different from what you initially expected now that you've progressed through your education process?

When I came in as a freshman in the fall of 2012, I thought that I was strictly going to learn about print, use printers, and then graduate with a printing career under my belt. As I progressed through the program, I realized that there are so many other channels to build a career. The opportunities are endless in the industry because of how many specialized niches there are in the field.

Q) Have you changed your plans or ideas about what area or type of job you might like to have since you first considered the graphic communications field and began studying for a career in it?

When I first started the program, I was interested in everything the program had to offer. My first few semesters, I found myself interested in the packaging and design side of printing. Now as a senior, it seems that I have completely switched directions, as I am so intrigued by everything that the digital and marketing sides of the industry have to offer.

Q) Has being a recipient of a PGSF scholarship made a difference in your education, and if so, how?

Receiving a PGSF scholarship allowed me to complete my final year of school without taking out another loan. I am now able to save up for a car on my own, without taking a loan out on that, too. Overall, this scholarship set in motion the plans that I was not planning on starting until after graduation, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to set those plans in motion ahead of schedule.

Q) Anything else that you would like to add?

I really think that PGSF is taking great strides in keeping themselves visible to us millennials. Keep it up!