

Toni Berning is a sophomore who is attending Ball State University, located in Muncie, Indiana.

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

A) In high school, I almost always got straight A's, so it was hard for me to tell what I actually enjoyed and what I could simply get good grades in. I always worked hard for my grades, no subject seemed particularly interesting or easy. In my junior year of high school, I took a Computer Art class, and that was the first time I felt that I had an aptitude for the coursework. Learning how to use the programs and finding creative solutions to projects came easily to me. Graphic design was the perfect solution for my equally right-and-left-brained self.

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 two Computer Art classes in high school, both of which prepared me with the basics of several Adobe programs. I came into undergrad leaps and bounds ahead of my peers, which gave me more freedom to discover more advanced applications earlier in my career.

The way I grew up also really set me up for success in this field. I helped my mother with her videography business, where I always tinkered with programs and completed small projects. Because my mom's business ran on Macs at home, and we used on PC's at school, I became fluent in both operating systems. My Math/English/Art brain was prepared for this field all along.

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

A) I am a Visual Communication major with a minor in Marketing (possibly adding a Bookmaking minor).

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?

A) I intend to pursue a career in Graphic Design, possibly doing some journal binding/freelance work on the side.

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

A) I really love the atmosphere at graphic design agencies. They offer a lot of variety with a solid, consistent, 8-to-5 schedule.

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

A) I think that employers are looking for simplicity and efficiency in today's workforce. To be able to communicate clearly an idea simply, effectively, and attractively is everything in the modern design field. Less is more.

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?

A) There have certainly been some surprises in my educational program. I haven't had the opportunity to learn as many technical skills from my professors as I expected. However, I have learned an exceptional amount about how to communicate concepts clearly, and how to make the viewer care about what they are viewing. The latter is an irreplaceable, imperative skill that I didn't even know I needed. For that, I deeply thank my amazing professors for creating an environment in which I could learn to understand the extremely conceptual aspect of art and design.

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?

A) My career intentions have pretty much stayed the same since high school. I job shadowed several companies, all of which had graphic design positions that interested me. However, the company that interested me the most was Messenger Press, a small graphic design agency that's about 10 minutes from my hometown. I loved everything about their work at that firm—the variety, the freedom, and the warmth was so inviting, so exciting! Variety has been an important part of my undergraduate career, therefore, the idea of variety in my professional career is still very enticing.

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

A) Being a recipient of a PGSF scholarship has made all the difference in the world in my education. I'm paying for my education all on my own, so every penny counts. Because PGSF provided me with a scholarship, I've been able to further my education outside of the collegiate setting. I was able to learn about bookmaking and buy supplies this summer, and I've been able to save money to go on a self-driven academic trip this May (studying graphics and art history in Italy).

Anything else that you would like to add?

A) I really appreciate and admire the way PGSF has decided to operate this scholarship. I really enjoy the consistent and personalized positive feedback that I've received from the organization, and they have always been really great about answering any questions I have/bringing clarification. The requirements they ask of us each year are very realistic and do wonders for helping promote the organization. As a marketer myself, I've found that their approach makes the most sense, especially in the realm of social media. I especially love that they encourage us to continually send letters to our scholarship donors. Sending a physical letter just adds a really beautiful touch to a really fantastic cause. I love PGSF and what they do; I've been telling all of my classmates at school about the organization every chance I get. Thank you to the moon and back PGSF!