

MY TWO CENTS' WORTH

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I'm not much of a nostalgic. In fact, I believe nostalgia to be one of the strongest inhibitors of any sort of progress. However, I cannot resist a smile when I look back on my time at RIT Croatia. Not only because of all the memories and friends I made along the way, but also because of the confidence in making the right choice enrolling into RIT in the first place. How could I possibly be so sure? Afterall, RIT is the only college I've ever been to - for now at least.

Well, it's not because of what was in the syllabi, and definitely not because of what is written on my degree. With all due respect to my ex-professors, I wasn't really interested in some of the subjects I was taking, and the polarity of my grades did a pretty good job depicting that. I was also never won by the sheer number of clubs and social events thrown by the student government. While I do applaud the effort, it just wasn't for me. My idea of college was rather something in the shape of 'come in – be active in class – do assignments at the very last minute (literally hand them in two minutes before midnight) – off you go'. Don't get me wrong, I was getting rather decent grades, took a double minor, and made friends for life, but in the end, for me it was not an experience I would cling on to. So, again, why am I speaking so fondly of my 'alma mater'?

It's quite simple. It hasn't been two years since graduation, and I have already found myself time and again grateful for what I've learned during the past few years. Upon thinking it through, I believe what I am most grateful for can all be boiled down into two simple, yet often counterintuitive pieces of advice:

I. Don't study, reason.

Once again, I am not necessarily talking about your degree-related curriculum. While it might be an unpopular opinion among your professors, you will find it sooner than later in your career that everything can be googled. Of course, you must know what to search for and sometimes there won't even be time for asking your best friend. Therefore, don't take it as gospel and think of studying as futile, as it definitely isn't – especially if you don't learn by heart, but by reason.

Everything you study, from business matrices to statistics, has been developed by someone who started just as you, from the ground up. Therefore, if presented with the

same problem as them and given enough time, you should be able to come up with basically the same solution. Think of it this way; you don't finish a marathon by learning where all of the turns and rises are. You finish it by learning the fundamentals of running, and the more you run, the more stamina you'll have. Approach your study with a problem-solving mindset and you will be much more successful in both looking up the right answers and improvising them yourself when needed.

Furthermore, your future employers will appreciate it. Companies don't look for know-it-alls when they recruit graduates. Who they do look for are people most likely to be molded into who the company needs, and when it comes to the popular fields such as consulting, they all have the same shortlists; independent thinker, adaptable go-getter, quick learner, team player, *etc.* Of course, there is some threshold knowledge you must possess, but those are the reasons why I am personally spending a bigger part of internship interviews asking what a potential candidate thought of their philosophy classes and whether they prefer essay type questions over multiple choice ones. Such classes are doing an excellent job preparing you for your future career, much more than you are currently aware of. Critical thinking, rational argumentation, and creative problem-solving are what translates into the aforementioned shortlist. On the other hand, tangible knowledge is the easier much more common part.

II. Jobs don't make a career.

Internship interviews bring me to my second cent's worth. Besides shaping you into a desirable candidate in ways mentioned, RIT provides you with the tools you need to steer your career from very early on. It is never too late to start, true, but it is never too early either. While to some it might seem obvious, most students aren't aware that their careers started by enrolling into college, if not earlier. More precisely, the idea that career should be thought of and navigated comes to many as a bolt out of the blue only upon graduation.

Personally, I was waiting tables on the weekends since my high-school days and had no more than two weeks of summer since my 15th birthday. Was it worth it? Of course, it was, at the time at least. I was earning my spending cash and was proud of it, even continuing to do so until my senior year. However, if it wasn't for the mandatory internships, I would fall into the same trap most Croatian students fall into; I would continue to work random jobs up until I was finished with college. At that point, I would be as tired of working as any of my colleagues were, but with no relevant experience nor skills to land me something better.

Instead, I seized an opportunity to do an Erasmus Traineeship abroad after my sophomore year, and even though it was an honestly underwhelming experience, it showed me which direction I didn't want my career to go in. Thereby, I had given more

thought into what might interest me, and had then spent my whole senior year working part-time in the consulting company I did my second internship in. I might've been lucky to confirm my interests from a second try, but that's exactly what internships are meant to be; trial and error with an added bonus of learning new skills each time. The point is, take only the jobs and internships which you see yourself doing in the future. That way, even if you are wrong, you will compound your skills, jumpstarting your career.

Likewise, it is often said that we should learn from other people's mistakes, but we often forget that is also the case with other people's successes. Had it not been for the guidance of the professors and advisors who sincerely cared about their students, I would probably never have the opportunities I did. In the end, you can only seize the opportunities you create, so go on and 'bother' your professors. Answer their open-ended questions, ask some of your own, and don't be afraid to argue your opinion. Don't make yourself 'just a number' – because this college is giving you plenty of chances, both tangible and intangible, not to.