

Major decisions, decisions...



By Joyce LaTulippe '87

One evening this spring, my 17-year-old niece called me from Arizona; she had finally decided upon a college.

The campus is beautiful. The guys are gorgeous. The film department, well, it is filled with state-of-the-art technical equipment, my niece bubbled over her cell phone. (Yes, her assessment of the school's value was delivered in that order.) Naturally, I was a bit deflated when she announced, last October, that she would not be applying to Wheaton. But I understood the need to be far away from Mom, Dad and all the familiar trappings of a childhood played out in a small town in Rhode Island. And then, as a natural progression of our conversation, my niece asked the next seemingly logical question, "Hey, what did you major in when you were in college, Aunt Joyce?"

I choked out a response. "Well, I majored in creative writing and literature." My confused niece paused and then chimed in, "I thought you studied

something to do with computers? Was that what you did at Harvard?"

After my undergraduate years at Wheaton, my own crooked career trajectory can best be described as a series of pratfalls executed by a misguided stuntwoman who has shown up on the set of the wrong film.

Sure, I had started out with the best intentions, following my passion for creative writing and poetry to its natural conclusion as a waitress, high school teacher, English as a second language instructor and finally—long story—a bridal shop owner. I do not think that I could have gotten any further away from my 20-year-old hopes and dreams to be a best-selling author if I had planned it all out with an expert career counselor.

Honestly, it wasn't until my late twenties, as a graduate student at Harvard, that I stumbled upon a career that brought my critical and creative thinking skills to a crescendo. For the past 11 years, I have been running my own technology agency, which combines

my passion for teaching and learning with my need to be creative and inventive. I have enjoyed working with educators nationwide to integrate technology effectively into their teaching practices.

Yes, part of me wants to tell my niece to major in something more practical than film studies. Why not go into pharmaceuticals, nursing or global business development? What's wrong with studying something just to earn a solid, steady paycheck? Why not do the film thing as a hobby *on the side*?

But I know better. My years as a writing and literature major at Wheaton were both challenging and exhilarating. I would not change a minute of it. I developed valuable critical and creative thinking skills that I do use every day on the job—no matter what my contract-of-the-moment might be. So I have faith that my niece will dig deeply and follow her own passions. And I hope she experiences the love of lifelong learning that I certainly discovered at Wheaton.


Before our conversation ends, I give my niece the one word, *just one word*, that she needs to know most before she embarks on her new life in Arizona:

"Are you listening?"

"Yes, Aunt Joyce."

"Plastics."

My niece pauses, totally not getting the famous movie line delivered by Mr. McGuire (Walter Brooke) as he instructs young Benjamin (Dustin Hoffman) about good investments. I sigh, "That's a famous line from *The Graduate*." There's another long pause. "What's *The Graduate*?" she asks.

I guess my niece will find out, soon enough, that the best advice for any graduate is simply to follow your passion—no matter where it leads. 

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