

A little help to our friends



Graduating from Wheaton without a job ranks as one of the most exciting and terrifying experiences in my recent memory. I was both thrilled at the idea of being able to do “anything” and completely overwhelmed by how to start my big search. Thanks to the Filene Center, I received some good advice about where to start, and today, as a Filene Center Liaison in Washington, D.C., I’ve had plenty of opportunities to think about the valuable role that alums can play in helping new grads.

Had it not been for an extremely patient (and I repeat, patient) alumna—Jane Martin ’74—my job search would have been a very different experience. Jane was the first person I met the summer after I graduated from Wheaton. The most im-


portant thing she did was simply to have a conversation with me about my interests. She allowed me to brainstorm about the job market in Washington, D.C., and discuss which jobs might fit my background and which areas to avoid. She explained how her career had taken shape over the years, and introduced me to the simple idea that your first job is rarely your last.

My conversations with Jane gave me the confidence to make my job search a little broader and explore options that weren’t even on my radar when I began. She enabled me to think more about shaping my career, rather than looking for a specific job. As the months went by, and some leads proved more fruitful than others, she served as a sounding board when I just needed to bounce ideas off of

someone other than my parents.

Now I’m having long talks with Wheaton seniors about what it’s like to juggle getting a new job and first apartment and how to use the D.C. Metro system. I’ve had lunch with Wheaton interns who are beginning the process of shaping their post-college experience, and had an equal number of ten-minute phone conversations about how I got the job I have now. I don’t know if I’ve had the impact on anyone that Jane had on me, but I hope I helped a few job-seekers feel more confident about just how many possibilities are available to them.

As alums, we have to do our part to help the next generation of grads. You do not need to supply seniors with a job; simply have a conversation

with them about what you do and how you got there. Your perspective is far more valuable than you might think. If you have to dig back into the recesses of your mind to recall how hard starting the job search was, please do. In keeping with the tradition of the supportive Wheaton alumnae/i network, we owe it to new grads to at least have a conversation with them about their next big step. We all remember that person who helped us feel a little more excited and a little less terrified as jobless Wheaton seniors. What better way to show our thanks for that support than to do the same for those who need it now? 

—By Rebecca Hale ’99

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