

Big Ideas

Ball State's advertising program has gained a reputation for its savvy graduates

by Sarah Davison

Advertising is an idea business, from pitching new products to promoting events to planning strategies for effective communication. The best in the business are those who thrive on creative ideas, a diversity of experience, and teamwork.

According to advertising sequence coordinator Michael Hanley, students who graduate from Ball State's advertising program are equipped with experience of putting theory into practice to tackle whatever the industry expects of them. He explains the program's secret.

"We're always focusing on real life," Hanley says. "That's the key to our success. Agencies know that when they have a student from Ball State, they're ready to hit the ground running."

Chris Campbell, who graduated two years ago, is employed by advertising powerhouse Carmichael Lynch, and works with automotive empire Porsche.

"I think [Ball State] is ahead of the curve, even compared to where I work," he says. "[My Ball State experience] kind of gave me the upper hand."

Campbell believes his strong affiliation with Ball State's chapter of the American Advertising Federation (AAF), coupled with the strength of his coursework, has been a major contributor to his success.

Serving as president of AAF his senior year, Campbell competed with his chapter at the regional level for three years and at the national level for two years. AAF competition consists of creating a campaign for a selected national company and competing against universities from around the nation.

"[AAF] forced me to learn beyond the classroom, but with the support of my professors," Campbell says. "It allowed me real-world experience to get myself in front of actual clients."

Campbell also speaks highly of his in-class preparation. "My professors had real-world experience," he says, "They weren't just academics—they were my coaches."

Mark Dominiak, a 1983 graduate, agrees that Ball State's advertising training provides students with an excellent



courtesy, Michael Hanley

Ball State AAF chapter members Michael Metcalf and Jessica Dinkelman present the group's campaign for Coca-Cola. Ball State competed against universities from across the nation.

background. After years of working in the corporate ranks, Dominiak now devotes some time to his alma mater, sharing his expertise in the classroom.

Dominiak says one of his goals as an instructor is to educate students about what to expect when they embark upon their careers, from the mundane to the unforeseen.

Dominiak was working with Boeing as a client in September 2001 when the attack on the World Trade Center occurred. He says the experience tested not only his ability to use what he had learned, but also how to deal with situations for which no one could prepare him.

"You get a lot of training in the media world to handle crises," Dominiak says. "But sometimes training can't ready you for reality. You never know when something like

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—Michael Hanley

[September 11] can affect you. You've got a job to do, and you have to separate it from every other human instinct you have as a person."

According to Dominiak, the industry is undergoing an enormous shift in who holds power. He says media

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—Marilyn Weaver

outlets like MySpace and blogs are emerging over companies that follow the traditional newspaper/magazine/television school of advertising, and he explains that Ball State graduates continue to have an edge.

“There’s a tremendous amount of relevance from these students who have a pulse on what’s happening,” Dominiak says. “The university is prepping people to step out into that role.”

Their strong curricular experience, coupled with an aggressive internship program, helps students build resumes that move them into positions with top companies, and extracurricular involvement helps. Senior Jessica Dinkelman’s impressive work has gained her recognition.

The AAF selected Dinkelman as one of the 50 Most Promising Minority Students for 2007. Both Dinkelman and fellow advertising senior Glenise Rice were chosen to participate in the 2007 Multicultural Advertising Internship Program, sponsored by the American Association of Advertising Agencies.

Dinkelman’s internship has led her to New York this summer to work for Euro RSCG. The company boasts such clientele as Heineken, Jaguar, Pfizer, and Louis Vuitton.

She says her time at the university and her involvement in AAF and other advertising organizations were integral in helping her land her internship. “I’m a big believer that you get out of things what you put into them,” she says, “and those [Ball State] experiences are really what sets us apart.”

Dinkelman was part of Ball State’s AAF chapter presentation team that finished third in their district at the 2007 AAF National Student Advertising Competition. The

team has consistently placed in the top three for the past five years.

Dinkelman says this year’s campaign company, Coca-Cola, praised Ball State’s plan as both cohesive and innovative, effectively exploring uses for new media.

Dinkelman, Hanley, and others contend that a nurturing element of the program is Ball State’s dedication to providing students with leading-edge technology and tools.

Department of Journalism chairman, Marilyn Weaver, agrees and explains that Ball State is on the advertising map because of its facilities, its professors, and its driven and enthusiastic students.

The university has invested in the program, Weaver says, demonstrated only in part through space and equipment that is second to none.

The department likes to hire individuals who have practiced in the profession, Weaver adds, because, “These are the people who know what it takes to survive in the business.”

She continues: “When I see presentations from our AAF, the sophistication and the professionalism they have amazes me—the way they can

anticipate questions, the way they handle themselves, their depth of understanding.

“We’re preparing the leaders of tomorrow,” she concludes.

Campbell believes students at Ball State have all the tools at hand to succeed. They only need to access them. Successful students have to be involved, keep up with current events, and be resourceful, he says. “They need to pick up a newspaper, utilize their professors, and get involved in AAF.

“It’s not about just going to class,” Campbell adds, “and luckily, Ball State doesn’t encourage just that.” ■



courtesy, Michael Hanley

Michael Hanley speaks with Michael Panyard during the 2007 AAF National Student Advertising Competition.