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Nadiah Johari

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# Two Graduates Find Success in Unexpected Places

By Nadiah Johari



Whitney Dastrup imagined she would get a nice corporate job when she graduated. She now travels back and forth between San Francisco and India managing a small nonprofit organization that provides education to poor children. Scot Marsden, who majored in finance and economics, did not envision himself working at one of the “Big Four” accounting firms, but is now enjoying his new job at Deloitte & Touche LLP.

While their early vocational journey has taken them down unexpected paths, both said that their Huntsman education has prepared them well for their new careers.

Whitney teamed up with another USU graduate, Casey Allred, and they serve as co-directors of Effect International, an organization that builds schools in countries where they might not otherwise be available. She recently worked in Sasaram, Bihar, which is one of the oldest cities in India. The city has a literacy rate that is among the lowest in the world. Today, as a result of the efforts made by Effect International, a school serving 250 students is open and operating there.

“It’s neat knowing you can make a difference, and it’s inspiring to see people who understand that and are willing to contribute to our cause,” Whitney said.

Whitney said her participation in the Huntsman School’s [Small Enterprise Education and Development \(SEED\)](#) Program in Peru helped her prepare for the job she now has with Effect International. Her internship in Peru taught her how to create and evaluate business plans. She’s been able to tap this experience in her new job where she has worked on five business plans, she said.



One of Whitney's duties at Effect International is running the business side of the nonprofit organization. They are preparing to launch what they call a "school-in-a-box" model, which is a new approach that has been tested in Africa. It's a market-based solution to education that would allow partners to open low-cost schools, complete with quality curriculum and teacher training programs offered by Effect International. The goal would be for each school in the chain to be profitable and self-sustaining within six months of opening.

"We try to run Effect International more like a business than a nonprofit, and people notice that," Whitney said. "We consider our organization a social business that will allow our schools to be 100% sustainable."

Scot said he has learned that Deloitte hires more than just accounting graduates, including many who majored in finance and economics so the firm can meet the varied needs of its clients.

Scot is an example of a student who benefited from the Huntsman School's unique opportunities. Through a Career Acceleration Trip, Scot had the opportunity to visit New York City and get connected with USU alumni who were already working in the Big Apple.

"This was a key factor in my job placement," he said. "The Huntsman School prepared me for my current position by providing me with financial and economic understanding of the investment management industry that I now work in."

Scot is working as a business risk consultant at Deloitte in New York. He said he had to go through preliminary interviews with officers from Deloitte in Salt Lake. Due to his specific interest in New York, he was referred to the New York office for final interviews. He said this is where his experience on the New York City Career Acceleration Trip helped him. He was able to get good referrals from USU alumni within Deloitte who he had met during the trip, he said.

During his senior year at USU, Scot served as the business senator for the Associated Students of Utah State University. He said the experience helped him to understand and apply leadership principles in his personal and professional life. He also said students should use the network within the Huntsman School when looking for jobs.

"Aggies are succeeding all across the world, and they are willing to do everything in their power to help you land your first job," he said. "Be aggressive in your job search, and believe in your potential."