

Mapping Success: UO Alum's Journey from Oregon to Illinois

By Lexi Frick, University of Oregon

Navigating college involvement is a universal challenge for students. Kelsey Munger, a University of Oregon alum from Salem, Oregon, leveraged her college experience to secure her dream job in Chicago.

As a freshman at the university, Munger hadn't really thought about a career path. However, the university offers a program called ARC for first-year students, standing for Academic Residential Communities. Each ARC program helps students find a community based on shared interests and passions. Munger was a part of the Social and Media Action ARC, where she was introduced to advertising and PR in the School of Journalism and Communication at the UO. From her early involvement with the ARC and core classes within the SOJC, Munger was certain of her career path by the end of her first year.

Although Munger was already double majoring in public relations and advertising, she was never afraid of getting involved. Munger heard about Allen Hall Advertising – a student-run advertising agency within the SOJC where teams produce professional-level work for real-world clients – from professors in the SOJC, and joined as a project manager for her junior and senior years. She joined Allen Hall PR as an account executive during her senior year, was the president of the Women and Creative Industries club on campus and a workshop director at After Hours – an advertising club on campus. In addition, she was also the PR and marketing director for her sorority.

Each position Munger held allowed for hands-on work and experience within the fields she was interested in, whether it be writing blog posts or posting on its social media accounts. As a project manager and an account executive, she gained real-world experience in the respective fields and could apply topics learned in class to her positions at the UO.

"You can be a straight-A student but that doesn't matter. Agencies and internships want to see that you have experience in organizations like AHA or Allen PR. You have to make the most of your time at school and get as involved as possible," Munger said.

Munger's involvement at the university and the connections she made is the reason for her job today. After her first year in Chicago, she found the PR agency through LinkedIn from a UO graduate who posted on the UO PR alum page that his agency had an opening. She reached out and sent her resume and without talking, he forwarded it to her now supervisor and got an interview with the vice president of KemperLesnik.

Originally nervous about the move, after visiting the city she had no doubts. Munger knew it was for her, with all of the opportunities not just for work but also socially. She could see herself thriving.

For the last year post-grad, Munger has been working as an account executive at KemperLesnik, a PR firm and sports marketing agency in the beautiful city of Chicago. She gets to do a little bit of everything media relations. One interesting example she shared was a client she works with who has over 100,000 followers on LinkedIn. "Most likely when you see CEOs

and C-Suites posting on LinkedIn, whether it's three-sentence posts or blog posts, people behind the scenes like me are the ones actually writing it," said Munger. Who knew?

All of the success Munger has accomplished from UO ties has inspired her to get even more involved, joining the Chicago Ducks alum program. "It really ignited something in me to want to give back to my community and be that resource for others." With the UO joining the Big 10, more people exposed to Oregon will be in the Chicago area. Munger is working with the program to create a strong Oregon alumni community in the city. Having grown up in Salem she understands the daunting jump from the suburbs to the city and wants to be a resource for others getting ready to make that transition.

"I think I was able to do that because of the connections and relationships I made at UO, the classes I took and the professors I had. All of the extracurriculars and other opportunities compiled into where I am now," said Munger.