

Monmouth Memories

Date: December 6, 2015

Interviewee: Nicole Achimov

Interviewer/Transcriber: Michael Achimov, Monmouth University Student

Place: Nicole's Home; Fair Haven, NJ

Nicole Achimov was born in Toms River, NJ on December 4, 1992. While she grew up in Toms River, her parents moved around within the town. This meant that she was forced to transfer schools and ended up attending three different elementary schools within the district. Once in intermediate school, however, the moving stopped and she attended only one intermediate school and one high school. During this time Nicole became less and less outgoing and much more introverted. Upon taking her SATs while attending Toms River High School North she was disappointed in her scores, but being in the top 20% of her class of nearly 600 she was still eligible for the NJ STARS scholarship program. Thus, she took this opportunity and chose to attend Ocean County College (OCC). It was during her first semester that her parents, however, chose to sell their house once again. This time they chose to move north to Monmouth County and in specific Fair Haven, NJ. That meant that Nicole would have to transfer to Brookdale Community College. While transferring Nicole decided to switch majors as well. She no longer had an interest in nursing, which she was pursuing at OCC, but instead chose business. Unfortunately, unlike OCC, she knew no one at Brookdale and was exposed to a much larger campus. Over time, Nicole began making friends at Brookdale. However, despite the large campus a majority of her classes were confined to one building and thus she never truly saw the entirety of the campus. Finally, she graduated Brookdale with her Associates Degree in Business in 2013.

It was at this point that Nicole was faced with an extremely tough decision; where to go next. She wanted to stay in New Jersey and close to her family and so the decision ultimately

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came down to either Monmouth University or Rutgers University. Obviously, she knew that the business school at Rutgers has an amazing reputation and being a public school she would have received the full amount from the NJ STARS program. However, her father was very against the idea of her attending Rutgers. After all, it is a very large school. Her older brother had attended Monmouth University and enjoyed his time there. It was also, her father felt, in a much safer area and undeniably closer to home. It was at this same time that the NJ STARS program changed their rules to allow students to attend private schools and still receive a scholarship; although less money. Thus, with all this considered Nicole chose to transfer to Monmouth. Yet, this did nothing to calm her nerves as she embarked on a completely new adventure. Her first impressions of Monmouth University did nothing to quell these fears. In specific, she had a particularly difficult time at her transfer orientation meeting with her advisor. It was so late after registration had opened that almost all the classes were full and she was only able to sign up for a few. This was extremely hard for Nicole and led to her crying in her car, but her advisor did not give up. With approval from the professors of the courses, Nicole's advisor was able to get her into closed classes and get her into all the necessary courses. Once beyond this scare, Nicole was ready to make the most of her time at Monmouth and found the beautiful campus was just the right place for her to succeed.

While at Monmouth University, Nicole commuted to school. This decision was in order to save money and because she worked closer to her home and wanted to keep her job. Unfortunately, she also found out that there were many cons to commuting, as well. The worst of which was during the first few weeks of each semester; it would be so crowded that commuters would not be able to find spots in the parking lot. Thus, in order to get to class on time she would have to leave extremely early from her house. As the semester went on it would be easier to find

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spots, but sometimes it would still mean a far walk in the rain. With commuting Nicole also would find that she would have gaps in her schedule that she did not have time to go home and thus would remain on, or near, campus. It was during these times that she found some of her favorite spots to hang out. In specific, she spent most of her time, like many of her fellow students, in the Student Center and Library while on campus. It was in these spots that everyone from classes would meet up to work on homework and study for tests. Yet, having a car she was lucky enough to be able to spend time off campus as well. It was during longer breaks that her and her friends, and brother, would often go to Wegmans or Panera for lunch.

In the classroom, Nicole made just as many amazing memories. One of those memories was her Strategic Management class that soon became her favorite. It was during this class that the professor set them up with real world experience and she even got the opportunity to interview the COO of Foodtown. However, one of the most influential people on Nicole, while at Monmouth, was Professor Bailey, whom she loved to take classes with. She enjoyed her class so much that she ended up taking three different finance courses with her. Another class that Nicole found particularly enjoyable was Art Appreciation. This was due to the break it gave her from the monotony of math and business courses. It was also in this class that she learned about the process of creating art and was able to express her own creativity. It also gave her an appreciation for the art surrounding her at Monmouth University. For example, she loved spending time in Rechnitz Hall and Pollak Theater because both of these had galleries and quite spaces for her to complete her work.

Then, after two years at Monmouth, Nicole graduated in the spring of 2015. This was an extremely important feat for her because she had so many memories of her brother graduating from Monmouth just a few years prior. Thus, she worked especially hard and even took summer

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classes to be able to graduate in the spring at PNC Bank Arts Center. Finally, she had earned her Business Administration Degree with a concentration in Finance. All she had left was her commencement ceremony. However, even though it was in May the day was extremely windy and cold. This made for some troubles when it finally came time for the ceremony. First, the commencement speaker had an extremely lengthy speech written up. Nicole recalls the students trying to clap him off stage twice. The second problem came with Nicole's graduation cap, which she had decorated. The cap was too heavy and would not stay on her head with the wind. Thus, this all made her all the more nervous to walk across the stage, but she did and was officially a Monmouth University alumni. So, her and her family then went back to Monmouth's campus to take photos before going out for a celebration dinner.

However, after being out of school for a few months she has now had time to look back on her time at Monmouth University. Unfortunately, she regrets a few things from her time at Monmouth. For one thing, she wishes she had done an internship, because of the hard job market she has faced since graduation. The other major regret is coming out of school with so many loans. Still, despite these she still has many fond memories and even wishes to go back to Monmouth soon to receive her MBA. After all, despite all the difficulties and adversity she faced throughout her time in college it was all for the best. It was during her time at Monmouth that she found many of her friends and even reconnected with friends from high school. On top of this, it has become a family legacy to attend Monmouth. Not only did her older brother graduate Monmouth University before going to medical school, her younger brother is currently a student at Monmouth. Thus, with one more sibling she hopes that the legacy will continue.