

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

[Catching Up With...theme pops in]

[Opens with Cold Open]

Erica Titus (cold open): If you get a job that you love, my best piece of advice is to make yourself invaluable. I know other people have already said that, but like, do the thing, like if your boss needs help with something and you're like, I'm not really sure if I know how to do this, solve the problem because that's what's gonna make you invaluable and that's what's gonna provide you with job security.

Wylder Tallman (cold open): Take advantage of the time you have and work on things that you find creatively fulfilling. Use that time to make the things you want to make and hopefully spin that off into something else.

Traci Bartlett (cold open): Don't be afraid to work on to taking the job while you're chasing your dream too. Whatever you gotta do as a side job, let that inform your whatever you wanna do, whether it's game making, whether it's an actor, whether it's in film, you can tie it all together. Don't be afraid to do your research and just keep swimming. That's all you can do.

Adam Fournier (Host): Welcome back to our special two part episode of Catching Up With. I am Adam Fournier, and this is part two of the 2025 Visions Alumni Panel, which of course is the kickoff to the annual event at Fitchburg State that showcases the best original student work in the Communications Media department.

For this year's alumni panel, we welcome back Traci Bartlett, Wylder Tallman, Kris Camp, Erica Titus, and Benjamin Borodawka. You can listen to our previous episode for Part One where our five Fitchburg State graduates talk about their day-to-day experience in their professions, how they build and maintain professional connections, and the moments and college experiences that had the most impact on their lives and their careers.

For this episode, we'll hear our esteemed alumni talk about their first steps into their careers, transitioning from college life to professional life, how each of them stay current in their respective fields, whether that's staying up to date with technology or adapting to shifts in the workspace, and their thoughts on job security, sharing bits of advice on today's fluctuating world of employment.

Thanks for coming back as we catch up some more with Traci, Wylder, Kris, Erica and Benjamin.

[Catching Up With...theme fades out]

Jeff Warmouth: Can you tell us a little bit about the transition from college to the professional world for you? So, whether that was finding your first job or creating your company or developing a freelance network or whatever that means for you.

Benjamin Borodawka: So I'm sure that there's still the internship program with the communications media department.

I actually had two internships and one of them was with Tufts Health Plan. And my manager, yeah, my, my manager at that internship he was a great guy and you know, we kept in contact after the internship ended. You know, I was searching for a job throughout the summer. The fall time rolled around and there was a startup that caught my eye and I just reached out to someone on LinkedIn and they said, yeah, phone call.

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Benjamin Borodawka: I go in for an interview. I give my list of references and the person interviewing me went to prom with my supervisor at Tufts Health Plan, which just proves that networking is like the most important thing. And I think if it wasn't for that random randomness, I may not have gotten that first job.

But yeah, networking was what got me my first job. And then that first experience really cascaded into the next experience, into the next experience.

Wylder Tallman:

I'll go next 'cause mine's lame.

So I got very lucky. My internship was with Boston Digital Productions, and we were in the midst of working on a 30 minute documentary, and I proved my worth and I did so well that they hired me on.

I expected to only stay through the length of the project, but by the time it rolled I became so invaluable that I've been with them ever since. So, you know, I got lucky. They're a great group and, so like I said, I wish I had a better story, but I lucked out, so I can't complain.

Erica Titus: I will actually go next because I have the same exact story.

This is my boss sitting right here, Josh. I guess we just hit it off so great that after internship I stayed, he hasn't been able to get rid of me yet, so.

Traci Bartlett: I mean, for me it was just, I mean, I'd escaped off to corporate world for a while and then my friend Gina, who I was friends with here at Fitchburg State, she forwarded a casting for, to me from Boston Casting, looking for a stand-in under four six.

And I did, and stupidly, don't do this. Don't do what I did. So they were asking for pictures and I sent in one with me and Hayden Christensen from Star Wars.

Why? I don't know why I did that.. I should have sent like a body shot or like a headshot or something like that. No, I didn't. I was like, oh, I'm not gonna get it. And I sent it in. I got it.

Don't do that. When they ask you for a picture, it means headshot or maybe like a three quarter shot or something like that. Like don't send them like a picture from a ComicCon. That's not gonna work.

Wylder Tallman: I'll give that a try next.

Traci Bartlett: Don't try.

Jeff Warmouth: That's great. That's awesome.

Traci Bartlett: That's how it happens.

Jeff Warmouth: But it worked though, so.

Traci Bartlett: It did. Also, don't join SAG too early. I did. I became a must join. A must join you gotta pay up and then it ties your hands into, like, you can't do any indie movies or anything like that.

It ties your hands. So be careful. And I'll also explain this too. You can join SAG locally, or you can join SAG nationally. It's less expensive locally. They'll let you like break it up because you have to pay, of course you have to pay your dues. So, but here's the thing, Connecticut. Half of Connecticut is our New England local.

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Traci Bartlett: The other half is not. How did I learn that? Because I got a gig in Stanford, Connecticut, which is not part of the local. Then you have to pay the other grand to join SAG National, and they will not divide that into installments. So be careful. All right. There you go.

Kris Camp: I think for me, in a lot of ways, I'm still transitioning out of college. I graduated last year, so it hasn't been that long. And I started the company while. I was still in college. I think the big thing for me is I love learning and I love teaching and I never want to be separate from this space, not necessarily Fitchburg State. Granted, I love Fitchburg State. I've always had a love for games.

But I think through being here, I found that I had a love for learning and teaching. So for me, getting a job teaching people. Game design, like that's a big thing for me. I guess the company's still running. We're making two more games, so I guess that's still chugging along too. Yeah, I guess if I'm ever back here for another Visions, I'll probably have a better answer about how that transition is going.

Jeff Warmouth: Grow up, who grow, who's growing up?

Kris Camp: Never grow up.

Jeff Warmouth: Exactly. So, we're communications media, of course. Media related fields are always changing. How do you stay current or are there, what are you reading or watching or playing or, you know, are there things that you're doing to stay current?

Wylder Tallman: For me, it's keeping up with the software, you know, of the times. Like I said my primary focus is AVID still, but Boston Digital Productions, we went to Premiere. Around two or three years ago now. I've dabbled in DaVinci throughout the years.

It's really keeping up with the technology of the time. You know, I've tried out a plenty of other film softwares is where editing softwares, Filmora I've given a shot at Cap Cut I've given a shot at, you know, it's really staying in tune with what folks are using and the techniques that they're using with it. You know, in this day and age with, you know, TikTok and all that, you know, you're looking at like really snappy transitions and elements and that kind of stuff.

So knowing how to pull those off will just kind of make your reel shine a little bit more. You know, motion graphics especially or animation, you know, it's something that I'm still coming around on. I love making a good lower third, but like you know, you gotta know how to animate and after effects or DaVinci Fusion, you know, keeping up to date with that kind of stuff I think is crucial.

And as with all professions, knowing AI and you know where your limit is with your own personal choices, you know, for the Nova I learn how to use 11 Labs, their AI voiceover software because for a while, for the documentaries we were using, one of the executive producers and he had to record every single line change and we had to eventually let him go from the project 'cause his contract was up.

So we turned to 11 Labs and voice cloned him. And so I got really good at making the fake robot sound lifelike, that it became my job to create the new voiceovers. And then that turned into me assisting with the actual voiceover artist when it came time to fully narrate the piece and struggling 'cause the AI talks faster than a human can.

So then it became, you know, balancing the two of those things, you know. So just knowing your technology, knowing when to use a certain software and keeping up with that software.

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Kris Camp: If I could actually jump in, I agree with a lot of what you said. I think understanding the software from a game developer standpoint is really important.

I think like a lot of the students here use Unity. And I would say a way to keep modern is by exploring other game engines. One, I'd like to say there's a lot of weird stuff going on in the game industry right now. That's a big reason why we started our own company, because we want to figure out what works for us.

I think one of the reasons why the game industry is in a bad place right now is partly because of Unity. I don't wanna say it's just Unity. It's a lot of things, but I think the thing I really want to press to the game designers here is understand that you are not a Unity developer. You're a game developer.

Do not tie yourself to any software. I highly suggest going with Godot. Especially if you're comfortable with Unity, it's a hell of a lot cheaper. The things you can make with Unreal is amazing. And even some of the folks here are more familiar with film like that even crosses over with film, so .

If the game industry burns tomorrow, and I mean, if you have Unreal skill, congratulations. You're also, you're in film now, so, just always be prepared to pivot to something else. And again, if you're dealing with software in any capacity, honestly, if you are a human being on this earth, be prepared to pivot.

It's gonna be a weird couple of years, like. Just be ready to make a move in a different direction.

Erica Titus: Also, to jump off of that, in relation to graphic design and like public relations, I think when I went to school, everyone used Adobe and probably everyone still does, but like everybody along down the line has been saying it's really important to be able to pivot.

So like for me, that means being able to work in Canva as well, which I know not everyone's favorite. And then also, staying current in this type of a role. It's like you don't want to be using AI to generate your content, but it's almost, in my opinion, unavoidable at this point. So it's kind of about just like figuring out how to get the AI system and whatever you're using to generate your ideas, your content, how to get it, to do what you need to do to like eighty percent, and then you need to be the one that gets it to the next a hundred percent.

So I don't know if that makes sense, but I feel like it's coming for us. We're all gonna end up using it. I use it already. We just have to learn how to make it work the best for us as the like person using the tool.

Benjamin Borodawka: I think that a common theme here has been like networking and you know, in, in tech in general I think networking takes the form of conferences, you know, whether it's like Microsoft Ignite or you know, Drupal Con or whatever you may go to, you, in corporate America, at least your, my company just like pays for me to go to a conference and I'll go there and network and talk to people. And, you know, that's the key is talking to people.

And staying curious. You know, earlier it was mentioned that you don't want to tie yourself to one software and in the web world or the software development world like you don't wanna tie yourself to a front end technology like Angular or a web technology like WordPress because those may just disappear.

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Benjamin Borodawka: Or the companies may have a feud with one another. Like in WordPress's case recently. You're not a WordPress developer and you're not an Angular developer, you're a web developer or a software developer. Those are just tools. And the tools don't really matter. They come and go. The core concrete skills that you learn are what matter.

Traci Bartlett: I'll say from a film and theater standpoint, it's all about ever since COVID 19, self-tapes. So have your like background, have your self tape set up, master the art learn some kind of software to learn how to clip your reels get your audio sorted out, things like that because it's not a lot, in-person auditions.

It's all pretty much online submissions now. So for me, 40. So that was something I had to learn. So I don't think it'll pertain to you youngins so much, but it is all self-tapes and stuff like that. So.

Wylder Tallman: Get that podcast equipment.

Traci Bartlett: Yeah, exactly. Your ring light. Absolutely.

Jeff Warmouth: We have time for just a couple questions from the audience, so I'm gonna kind of roll 'em into one.

Are you concerned about job security? And then related to that, have recent strikes, specifically in film and video and in other fields or layoffs in terms of game affected your work. And how does current news affect your, your work, or your professional field?

Three hard hitters, but I'm kind of rolling 'em into one if you have anything to say about any of those.

Kris Camp: Job security unfortunately, is a myth. Whether or not you're working retail, whether or not you're starting your own company. Whether or not you're at Nintendo, I think the best thing you could do for yourself is educate yourself. And again, always be prepared to pivot.

And I guess to answer the recent events thing really quickly, the tariffs are making video game development very expensive, and that's kind of the future we're walking into. I would suggest either buying your technology now while you can, or finding ways to use lightweight technology and lightweight software like Blender. You could run Blender on a toaster. Godot. You could run it off of a, I'm not even kidding about this. You could run it off of USB stick, like I legitimately can have a game engine on my phone.

Think about ways you can do what you do cheaper because things are about to get very expensive.

Wylder Tallman: The beauty of being a professional video editor is I am perma- freelance. I like to say I'm employed at BDP. Really, I send them an invoice every two weeks if I have enough hours to justify it, you know. So what's been going on in, in our corner of the world it's slow.

Like I'm very thankful to have a lot of repeat clients and a lot of folks that like the groups that I work with 'cause otherwise, you know between the strikes and all the other things going on, like it, it is scary and it is not fun. And so really the biggest thing I can say is take advantage of the time you have and work on things that you find creatively fulfilling.

And so if you are in that kind of slowdown and you can you know, afford it, use that time to make the things you want to make and hopefully spin that off into something else. Like I

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Wylder Tallman: said, I use my evenings to build a superhero universe with some other alumni, because hopefully that will be our golden parachute.

Hopefully that will get us independent from the rest of the everything going on, you know, and just be prepared. Be ready to pivot, be ready to go through a couple of really sucky years 'cause, we are already in the dog water, it seems. And there, you know, the only thing you can do is look out for you and yours and your communities and build those communities stronger and keep getting each other work, and keep trying to get each other's bills paid.

You know, just try to stay positive, try to keep working and don't feel the fear, use that fear to create something new.

Traci Bartlett: I don't have anything really super unique to add. I mean, it's slow. But I will say that at the moment, and who knows what'll happen, like with the tariffs and stuff like that. It's probably a better climate right now to be like in indie filmmaking rather than union filmmaking.

'Cause who knows what's gonna happen to the unions. And most of the jobs, because of the LA fires, 'cause of strikes and everything, a lot of the big films are moving to film overseas. What's gonna happen with that? Who knows. So just do what you can. Stay alive. Swim.

That's all you can do. Swim. And don't be afraid to work on to take another job while you're chasing your dream too.

Like say if you're really into cars, then you can learn to be a precision car driver. You can do that for films. Like you can, like read castings, like I saw casting today looking for an experienced person to cut blue fin tuna. Like whatever you've got, whether you're an EMT, you can make yourself get a pay bump, work as an EMT on a film.

Whatever you gotta do as a side job, let that inform your, whatever you wanna do, whether it's game making, whether it's an actor, whether it's in film. You can tie it all together. Don't be afraid to do your research and just keep swimming. That's all you can do.

Kris Camp: Sorry to make this such a Debbie Downer for the last question.

Wylder Tallman: Who's got a fun question?

Jeff Warmouth: Of course. I'm the one who opened up the question...

Erica Titus: Okay. I think that going off of that, I think you guys can say job security is a myth, but there are jobs in the world and people do sit in the seats and do the things, and so if you get a job that you love, my best piece of advice is to make yourself invaluable.

I know other people have already said that, but like. Do the thing, like if your boss needs help with something and you're like, hmm, I'm not really sure if I know how to do this. Google it. Ask Chat GPT about it. Solve the problem because that's what's gonna make you invaluable and that's what's gonna provide you with job security.

Benjamin Borodawka: Yeah. I'll say something brief. I think that job security is, if you're worried about job security, you should be worried about job security. And if you're not worried about it, you shouldn't worry about it because you're probably, you don't have to worry about it. If you've differentiated your skills to the point where you can pivot into a different job, if what you have goes away, then you'll be fine.

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Benjamin Borodawka: But if you've pigeonholed yourself into one very small niche thing, then you may have something to worry about. And when it comes to graphic design, you can differentiate yourself in a web design or UX design or web development. In my case, it has turned into software development. You know, it's not something I think about.

Jeff Warmouth: I really appreciate your candid responses to these. I want to end on a positive note. Very. I want to can we go down the line very quickly? What do you like best about your job? One thing.

Traci Bartlett: One thing, one thing, one thing. My gosh. I think reaching the end of a show, like in theater, like, and when it's gone well and you've remembered every single line and then everybody claps.

That's a good thing. I like that.

Wylder Tallman: Getting to be creative, you know, be the nice thing with the projects I get to work on is I get a lot of freedom with my edits and just getting to tell stories, getting the information out the way that you think is the most effective, and getting to see an awesome video at the end of the day.

That's all we're here for. You know, I love telling stories and I love that I get to tell them through my edits.

Benjamin Borodawka: I think that corporate America, there's a lot of benefits to it. The benefits, the pay, the location, like all of those things are great, but like ultimately I like working with really talented people every day who are really skilled at what they do, who energize me to do better each day.

And that's, yeah, that's my favorite part.

Erica Titus: My favorite thing about my job is the creative flexibility, but also the work life balance, flexibility that I get to have. I meet the deadlines and everything's good. And I also get to like, go to the theme park with my daughter if it's a nice day out, which you can't really beat that.

Kris Camp: I liked that I get to work with my friends. I don't know. Yeah. I'm really blessed to be able to work with very talented people and it's great being able to face challenges with them. I think life would be far too boring if there was no challenges in front of us.

Jeff Warmouth: So please join me in a round of applause for our amazing alumni.

[Catching Up With...theme fades in]

Adam Fournier (Host): Thanks for listening to the conclusion of another Alumni Panel episode of Catching Up With. If you want to attend an Alumni Panel in person and support art made by the talented students at Fitchburg State, you can attend the next Annual Visions Exhibition, which is open to the public. Go to fitchburg.state.edu/visions to find more info about the event.

It's free. There's food. It's a great time, I promise. Once again, I'm Adam Fournier and thank you all for joining me.

[Catching Up With...theme fades out]

[Perseverantia network theme fade in]

CATCHING UP WITH...Communications Media Alumni Panel - Visions 2025 Part 2 (of 2)

Ryan Woods: This is Ryan Woods, senior at Fitchburg State University, and you're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.

[Perseverantia network theme fade out]