



“something you’re  
passionate about.”

- raffaele napolitano

"If you had asked me when I was a freshman in college, I wouldn't have been able to see myself doing this."

Currently, **Raffaele Napolitano '11** is in a three-month training program to become an import sales agent working closely with the Italian import sales manager at Phoenix International. He's learning how to increase their Italian import clients who are part of high fashion brands like Gucci. First he'll be in customer service and then he'll be directly helping his boss. "It's exciting," he said when describing his work, he really loves what he's doing and the people he's working with. When he finally works up to his full position, he will be traveling to the beautiful Milan, Italy five times a year to correspond with Phoenix International's office and meet with clients.

Raffaele graduated a semester early after discovering his dream job at Phoenix International. When asked about how he found it, he replied, "It's a funny story actually, it kind of just fell into my lap." His tale is definitely a once in a lifetime chance. Raffaele was in the right place at the right time, and he knew how to take advantage of it. He had a summer job working part-time at Coach Leatherwear at a mall in New Jersey. One day a customer came in looking to make a purchase. He was the last customer in the store, so naturally Raffaele came over and helped him from start to finish. All the while, they were conversing, and it turned out the customer was the regional manager of Phoenix International for New Jersey and New York, and he also happened to be with the regional manager for Japan. When they got to the register to pay, the man used a Japanese credit card. Raffaele mentioned that it looked exactly like the credit card he used while studying abroad in Italy. Intrigued, the regional manager asked more about Raffaele's education. Raffaele knew exactly what to say, he had his 30-second elevator pitch perfected and ready to go. In the time that it took to swipe the man's credit card he explained that in addition to spending five months in Italy, he also double-majored in Italian and Media & Communications. The men then informed him that they were actually looking for a junior sales representative to help the vice president of sales who was also the Italian development manager. Raffaele eagerly exchanged emails with them, and a month later he had a job offer. His experience goes to show that jobs can come out of literally nowhere, and being prepared for every opportunity pays off.

From freshman year until now, Raffaele has noticed that he's matured in how he balances his life. Freshman year for any student is hectic and difficult. As it progressed for Raffaele, he learned how to balance his academics, social life, and extra curriculums better. "I achieved the best balance in my second to last semester in college." Achieving that balance in college was even more imperative once he entered the working world. Raffaele described having a job as "definitely very different" from being in college. "You think that not having homework, tests and exams anymore means that you'll have all the free time in the world when you get out of here... But it's not like that because these eight hours of work are just as straining as a full day of classes and tests." So from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM he's at work, but after that he has the time to be a part of his church chorus and go out with friends. Raffaele managed to attain the fine balance of work and play.

While at Muhlenberg, Raffaele thought he wanted to pursue film distribution and marketing, but after partaking in an

internship during his winter semester for film rights management distribution company, he realized that the field wasn't right for him. "Definitely doing internships and having that base knowledge beforehand is really important" he advised. He also said the best thing he did was study abroad, which allowed him to fully immerse himself into the Italian culture, literature, and film. Through these experiences, Raffaele realized that sitting behind a desk all day just wasn't for him. He needed a job that allowed him to connect with people face-to-face. "I will be traveling more often to meet with clients and it will be more directly interacting with people, both on the phone and in person, as well as traveling, which are things that I really enjoy doing." In succeeding at his new job, Raffaele realized that every course and experience at Muhlenberg undoubtedly build upon each other. "I really see how everything connects now. I feel a little light bulb going off, like wow, how useful those courses were that I took and having majored in what I did, all of it was towards what I'm doing now."

Raffaele's biggest piece of advice? "With whatever you study or go forward with in your career, it's very important to make sure it's something you're passionate about." Everyone has heard that advice before, but until you find what motivates and excites you, it's hard to realize the weight of what it truly means. In Raffaele's case, his family had tried urging him to go to law-school and become a lawyer, but it was at that point that he recognized his own passion for the Italian language and communications. The bottom line: If you want to be successful, find the passion that drives you hardest and run right after it.