

Keeping My Balance as a Model Student

Maria Montgomery
CSD Distance Learning Graduate Student



Serving as Miss Kentucky USA 2009, during my sophomore year of college, taught me the true definition of “busy.” While continuing my education as a full-time student, my year quickly filled with writing speeches, speaking at elementary schools, charity work, visiting nursing homes and hours and hours of preparation to compete in the Miss USA pageant. Though I didn’t become Miss USA that year, being close enough to the crown by placing fourth runner-up made me hungry for what the entertainment industry had to offer. My acting/modeling agency, 180 Talent in Nashville, immediately sent me to an AMTC (Actors Models and Talent for Christ) Convention where I was scouted by FORD models. I had held FORD in the highest regard since I was young. Signing my contract with FORD Models changed my life forever.

Nonetheless, I began planning on how I would reach my ultimate career goal of becoming a speech-language pathologist in order to enhance the future quality of life for children with disabilities. After researching which universities offered accredited degrees online, I was distraught to learn that there were only about five schools nationwide with online communication disorders degree programs. However, I was ecstatic that one of those was Western Kentucky University (WKU), in my home state! The acceptance letter from WKU brought tears and literal jumps of joy and began my graduate school journey. Since then I have spent months in Chicago as well as Miami. Yet due to my true southern heart, I often live at home in Kentucky where I can fly out for work during the week.

The balancing act of completing a graduate degree while modeling/acting full time requires time management skills just like the other jobs that my fellow students manage along with their family (and they amaze me by how smoothly they do so!). However, thanks to online courses, it is possible. With online courses, I was worried about the lack of interaction with the professors. Yet WKU’s courses, provided over Adobe Connect, allow me to tune in “real time” to listen to class, ask questions as the professor explains the material, and even break into groups for projects! These standout factors alone were why I chose to attend WKU’s online program over any other school’s program. Many alternative online programs only offer a copy of their campus courses recorded on CDs to watch in your own timing, or simply ask you to read a book and turn in assignments. I may be decent at multi-tasking, but I need deadlines and live interaction to really stretch my mind to its full capacity.

Without online courses, the question of “what if I had given modeling and acting my true attention” would still exist in my head today. Without modeling and acting, I would never have learned all that I have about this astonishing world we live in. It is incredibly possible to continue with an active life while completing a degree. After graduating proudly with my Master’s degree, I don’t plan to slow down, but hope to start my career as a speech-language pathologist on a part-time basis while continuing to model. I am eager to begin positively impacting someone’s life using the gift of communication while working as a speech-language pathologist. Words can’t express my gratitude not only for WKU offering

prestigious graduate degrees online, but even more so, that they take the effort to make even their online students feel like part of the on-campus family.

My senior year of college was my first year under contract with FORD Models. However, modeling and acting jobs were limited due to my on-campus undergraduate program requiring Monday-Friday class attendance. I remember absolutely cringing when I had to turn down various modeling jobs because I needed to be on campus. Nonetheless, I began planning on how I would reach my ultimate career goal of becoming a speech-language pathologist in order to enhance the future quality of life for children with disabilities. I had always assumed I’d immediately begin my graduate studies at the same university that I completed my undergraduate degree (Eastern Kentucky University). Yet I couldn’t clear the question of “what if I really gave modeling a shot and took this lifetime opportunity opposed to doing graduate school full time?” I knew it was not feasible to physically attend on-campus courses while truly giving this agency a fair shot. I knew modeling would require me to live in various cities for a couple months at a time and to fly from my home in Kentucky very often. It was imperative I gave my dream a shot right at that moment.

Getting “dolled up” by professional make-up artists, trying on cool clothes and smiling at a camera is all modeling takes, right? I will admit that I too thought modeling was this simple. I have since learned it is without a doubt, a full-time and demanding job. When people I’m unfamiliar with ask what I do, I

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find it best to summarize it by calling it "working in advertising" because that is exactly what it is. Models are part of the advertising team. The hours and hours of traveling, bookkeeping, auditions, agency meetings and simply being willing to go anywhere at any time can be strenuous. I literally have been asked to hop a plane the next day to accept a job! Not only that, but the time out of the studio with memorizing lines, rehearsals for commercials/films, staying fit and simply energizing with plenty of rest is vital to

being successful. If I don't stay on top of my skills, I most likely won't be back for that same company and therefore my income could slowly decline. And since this is my one and only source of paying for my graduate school loans, I work hard and study my field!

I have been known to sneak out in the halls after runway shows in order to make class in time. I've also listened to classes during long road trips to various cities by plugging the streaming class on

my phone into my car stereo. "Attending class" while waiting in an airport is a wonderful way to forget the hours you are losing waiting for delayed flights! Lastly, there is just nothing like a text book on a treadmill to camouflage that dreaded screen stating how long until I finish my workout! When it comes time to do an externship placement, I simply make sure I'm living in an area near the externship site, complete my hours part time and slow down modeling a bit in order to breathe.