The 2019 Global Public Relations Study Abroad Program in London (#UKPR19), hosted by George Mason University, a public research institution in Fairfax, VA, is a fast-track immersion into the world of professional communications. From boutique agencies to a Fortune 500 company, students visit global leaders in public relations, public affairs and nonprofit and corporate communication.

I had the privilege of attending #UKPR19 as one of the only students not in pursuit of a communication degree, and so, as a visual designer, I created this sizzle reel to better convey how exciting this trip was for us.

The sizzle reel includes five of the quotes I found most poignant from the trip. Read on to find out why they matter.

*"It's all about storytelling." -Matt Grossman, Disney*

Effective storytelling is necessary to advance the positioning of a company's brand. From a Fortune 500 like Disney to a smaller agency like Stripe to even a global security company like Northrop Grumman, a common theme between all of their explanations about public relations is the importance of storytelling.

*"When you smell opportunities, chase them." -Marshall Manson, Brunswick*

We met with many people, all of whom came from different walks of life—everyone from CEOs like Ketchum UK's Jo-Ann Robertson to newer account managers like Hill+Knowlton Strategies' Sam Baden. However, a commonality between everyone is that each and every one of them took opportunities that challenged them. They weren't afraid to take risks. Nobody had a mapped out plan of what their career in public relations would exactly look like; they had a general understanding of their strengths and knew their aspirations, and they took the opportunities that would further their growth.

As a college senior, this advice was really enlightening. As we enter the workforce, it's important for us to be adaptable and open-minded. We may not be in our dream job right away, but it's important to put in the work and effort into getting there.

*"Big data is growing." -Eleonora Caliò, Kantar Millward Brown*

This one's important. We are living and working in the age of digital disruption, meaning the industry is constantly changing and adapting to new technologies. With companies like Facebook and Google, which have massive reach and insights on consumers, disrupting the traditional agency model, agencies are working harder than ever to stay on top of their successes and maintain their edge. Kantar Millward Brown, for example, uses big data to provide unique insights to their clients to help drive more successful campaigns and engagement.

*"Not even Mark Zuckerberg knows what tomorrow will look like." -Zareen Siddiqui, Edelman*

As previously mentioned above, the field of public relations is constantly changing and adapting. No matter what tools or insights you have, there are just certain things no one can truly predict. Being agile, creative, and up-to-date with current events and news will serve you well in public relations. Whether it's news hijacking or crisis communications, you can never really predict what a day in the life of public relations will be like.

*"Always operate at the level above you." -Sam Baden, Hill + Knowlton Strategies*

It's no secret that public relations is a competitive field. #UKPR19 had the privilege of picking the brains of many different people. Baden is in his first year of being an account manager at Hill + Knowlton Strategies, and one of his biggest pieces of advice for us—college students about to enter the workforce—is to always operate at the level above us. Say yes more often. Take on responsibilities. Constantly work to improve yourself. It can be overwhelming and intimidating as an entry-level employee who wants to one day be a director, but we just have to take it one step at a time.

*"The cheeky inherit the Earth." -Clare Coffey, Hill + Knowlton Strategies*

Clare Coffey, Director at Hill + Knowlton Strategies, explained the crucial difference between being clever and creating a stunt. When thinking of public relations, many people's first thoughts go to parties and high profile events. These stunts, while successful most times, aren't what most people in public relations are working on. Coffey explained how creativity and cleverness often come with the harder, maybe not-so-sexy, briefs. Creating success from smaller budgets in more niche sectors with harder target audiences to reach—now that's impressive.

There are many more lessons I took from #UKPR, but these were just a few of the highlights. Before this trip, I had no formal training in public relations. As a graphic designer and business minor, I had found myself taking on roles at various jobs and internships that required me to learn some public relations skills, and it is through those experiences I learned the value and nuance of public relations. However, it is through #UKPR19 that I really got to delve into the industry, discover my own strengths within public relations, and truly learn the importance of public relations firsthand. For any college students looking to study abroad, **do it**! It will be one of the most exciting, rewarding, and hands-on experiences of your college career.