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New Hampshire

International Educator

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IA ALUMNA PROFILE: MEET ROBERTA BARBIERI '88 GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT DIRECTOR OF DIAGEO IN NORWALK, CT

Roberta Barbieri graduated from UNH in 1988 with a dual major in International Affairs (IA) and Environmental Conservation. She studied Italian language and completed her IA foreign experience in Urbino, Italy.



My current role of setting and driving the global Environmental Sustainability strategy for the world's largest premium alcoholic beverage company feels like the culmination of 20 years of career planning, planning that started at UNH when I learned about the Center for International Education and the opportunity it gave to match up my passion for the environment with my love of languages and travel. At the time, I was only the second student ever to match Environmental Conservation with International Affairs (you can read about the first one, Brook Boyer, in his alumni profile at http://www.unh.edu/cie/alumni_profiles/index.html). But for me, it was a perfect fit.

My career aspirations at the time were vague: to do something to protect the environment and to do it at the international level. CIE gave me the much-needed structure within which to develop that nebulous thought into an actual career plan. I began my career as an intern with Pitney Bowes (PB) in Stamford, Connecticut – a job I found through the Boston-based Environmental Careers Organization. I spent nine years at PB covering a range of environmental compliance and product stewardship activities. Next stop from there was Joseph E. Seagram & Company where I was Global Environmental, Health and Safety Manager. In my current

role at Diageo, I have the pleasure of focusing fully on global environmental strategy and am enjoying the opportunity to have a direct impact on Diageo's environmental footprint in over 80 countries around the world.

When I speak with students or parents of students who are thinking about study abroad, I cannot say quickly enough that this is an incredible experience not to be missed. Study abroad in Italy was a time in my life that I look back on now as perhaps THE scariest thing I have ever done (second only perhaps to having children!) but also one of the most rewarding, fun, and life-changing. I arrived in Urbino, Italy, leaving behind my family and friends, speaking very little Italian, and not knowing a single individual in the entire country. To say I was 'immersed' (and terrified) would be an understatement. By the end of my eight months there, I had achieved complete fluency in Italian, spent Carnevale in its European home of Venice, traveled throughout Europe including Czechoslovakia and East Germany (then behind the Iron Curtain), spent the summer in Rome with my Roman friend and his family, picnicked on the Appian Way, located the gravesites of my father's Italian ancestors, and celebrated my 21st birthday in Sicily. Now, 21 years later, I carry warm memories of that special time.

But how did it help my career? I gained no specific resume experience during my time in Italy. What I did gain was a newfound confidence in myself and my ability to overcome fear, an understanding that with great risk comes great reward, and the profound insight for a 21-year-old that the world is a far bigger place than I had ever imagined. All of these “learnings” have directly enabled me to chart a path for myself that, 20 years later, has brought me to the best job I’ve ever had, making a real difference for the environment with a truly international scope. I arrived in Italy as a young American from a small town in New England. I left as a citizen of the world. I’m grateful to UNH and CIE for providing the start to that transformation.

IA ALUMNI:

Are you engaged in an international career?
Send us your profile!

See details at <http://www.unh.edu/cie/alumni/profiles-submit.html>

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