

# Fordham Footsteps: A Conversation With Emily Pandise, FCRH '14

Matt: Welcome to Fordham Footsteps, the podcast that features Fordham alumni and discusses their path from student life to their current career.

Sara: Some will have a direct correlation to their majors and others will describe how they took some unexpected turns. Either way, expect an insider's guide to certain industries and some great stories from our esteemed alumni. I'm Sara Hunt Munoz, Senior Director for Strategic Initiatives.

Matt: And I'm Matt Burns, Associate Director for Young Alumni and Student Engagement, and with us today is one Emily Pandise, Fordham College Rose Hill class of 2014, who graduated with a BA in Communications and American Studies.

Sara: Welcome to the podcast.

Matt: Welcome.

Emily: Thanks for having me, I'm excited to be here.

Matt: Tell us: what do you do now?

Emily: So now I am a journalist. I am an Associate Producer covering business tech and media news for NBC News, MSNBC and all the affiliated partners and platforms.

Sara: Is that where you envisioned yourself when you were a communication major?

Emily: Well, I added the communications major because I envisioned myself still at NBC. I really applied to college thinking that I was going to be a playwriting major. I changed my mind about 18 times. I decided on American Studies really because a classmate of mine, who was a senior when I was a freshman, that I had a lot of respect for. He was like, "I'm an American Studies major, you should probably do that too". And then I was looking at the five majors I was really torn between and I was like, "Oh, I can just combine these all into one interdisciplinary major". And then through doing work at the Fordham TV station and WFUV and interning, I was like, Oh sheesh, I want to work in television. Let me see if I can take some of that interdisciplinary stuff I've already been doing and make it into a comms major. So I did it in three semesters.

Sara: So talk a little bit about the internships.

Emily: I started interning at the Weekend Today Show when I was a junior and I actually stayed there for two semesters. I felt like I had a lot to learn in that environment, especially the team was really small and it was super hands on. I was able to take the skills I had learned from class and from doing it myself at Fordham TV to shooting, helping to shoot pieces for Weekend Today, and working with the producers there and really learning a lot. And the dynamic from being a part time intern to being a full time intern was really different. So I was like, I like this team. I want to grow here. I want to learn how to tell a great story in this visual medium. So that's why I decided to stay for two semesters.

Emily: I also interned at MSNBC when I was here. I did the last part with Lawrence O'Donnell, which was great. It was totally, cable is totally different than broadcast, but I learned so much and I had a couple of other internships. I worked at the radio station in a couple of different ways here. I worked at a theater company. I did stuff for the Fringe Festival with Matt back in the day, so I did a lot of stuff as an undergraduate that I think really helped the Cura Personalis mission that we're all striving for as Fordham students.

Sara: Did you identify the internships yourself or did you use people that you knew in the industry or career services or how did you get these jobs?

Emily: So actually the woman who created the morning show that I was producing here at Fordham, Fordham Mornings, she had the internship and she was like, "Hey, this is really great. Do you want me to give them your resume?" And I was like, "Yes, I would like that very much." And that's really how it happened. And that internship led to the next internship, which led to, I was in the elevator with the woman running the program I was in, right after graduation and I was like, "Hey, I'm super interested," and it was really just kind of right place, right time and that's how it happened.

Sara: And that program was the?

Emily: The Page Program at NBC.

Sara: Okay. Very popular. Very well known.

Matt: How did that go?

Emily: It was great. It was fun. I was only a page for seven months, but I really-

Matt: Is that unusual?

Emily: The program has changed quite a lot since I was in it. Now you're locked in for a year. It's up to a year. I did four assignments in six months, which is kind of a lot, and then got a job again through someone that I met during one of my internships. That was full time and guaranteed to be more than a year. And that's, and I've been at ABC ever since. So if you include my time as an intern, I've been there for six years.

Matt: So I want to take a step back and look at some other stuff you did as a student. If you had a guess, how much time do you think you spent in Collins auditorium?

Emily: Oh...

Matt: Weeks? Years?

Emily: I mean, okay, let's do the math. Right? Okay. So if I was there on a short week, 12 hours a week, on a long week, 30 or 40 hours a week. Like I've slept overnight in Collins auditorium. I've slept overnight there. I've eaten all of my meals there.

Matt: At what time for Fordham Mornings did you have to wake up?

Emily: Yeah, no, Fordham Mornings was at... I was waking up at seven to get to the studio on time for a taping at 10.

Sara: And you were on air? Or you were producing?

Emily: I was a producer. As much as I love creating things, I've not an on-air person, this is quite uncomfortable for me, don't tell anybody. Yep. So I went right from cutting our show Tuesday nights for Fordham Mornings, waking up early, getting to the studio to actually put on the show, racing to the Metro North to go to my internship at, it was Weekend Today at the time, it might've been Last Word, I can't remember. And then running home, doing Mimes stuff, working on FET shows, which I was always doing, writing my undergrad thesis. Thank God, they were like, we don't want to read anything more than 30 pages. Please spare us from your thoughts. And I was like, thank God I can't write anymore. Wouldn't have had time.

Emily: That was the only semester of my life that I ever drank energy drinks on a consistent basis-

Sara: Oh wow.

Matt: Oh wow.

Emily: Was my first semester senior year because I was running around like a crazy person.

Sara: Well, how did you not burn out? I mean that seems like so much.

Emily: I feel like all of the things that I was working on were really meaningful to me. Like Legally Blonde, which I produced. I was like brought to tears during every performance and that was my, that might've been my favorite mime show I did. My undergraduate thesis was again really fun, a project that I really loved working on. I'm very close with my classmates from that time. My internship was super fun. Again, I still like people that I met through those experiences or people that I work with now.

Sara: Okay.

Matt: And how did, I mean we talked about balancing all that but the practicalities of those experiences actually prepare you and in particular, because I'm sure are going to be a lot

of Mimes/FET students listening to this saying, that sounds like a cool career. How does what they're doing now, which you did, translate to the work that you're currently doing professionally?

Sara: Yeah, how you leverage the skills you learn-

Matt: Exactly.

Sara: In your club activities and make them worthwhile for your career?

Emily: Well, when I, so as I mentioned I did the page program. My next step out of that was an admin role. I was supporting a couple of our news executives and when it came time to look for my first quote unquote big girl job, I was like, what are the qualities that are really important to me? And it was like when was the last time I really felt joy in what I was doing and what did that joy look like? And I was like that joy was producing theater and television at Fordham. The big component of that was having a live element. I love the adrenaline of being in an environment where it's down to the wire and you're on deadline and it's not a matter of when something is finished, it's a matter of when it's time to go to air or for the curtain to rise, what have you.

Emily: I really love working in teams, which is definitely something that I learned from all of my activities and classes here at Fordham and I really liked being a leader, which is again something that I did at Fordham very much and again, I'm still like relatively junior in my career, so I'm working towards that. But I will take leadership opportunities whenever, if they're available to me because that's an important part of it as well.

Sara: So after the admin role you got into producing or what was the last step for you?

Emily: So my next step was I worked at the breaking news desk at NBC. So the breaking news desk really is the gatekeeper of information for the network. So for instance, see a tweet that something wild and crazy is happening somewhere in El Paso, right? El Paso is notoriously difficult to get to. It is very far away. So, the desk will then, so it was my job to call local authorities, call--calling the sheriff, calling local law enforcement, using Google maps to look at businesses down the street and see like, call the gas station and be like, "Do you see anything that's going on? Can you tell me what you're seeing?" And then saying like, okay, this is going to be a big deal. This is going to be on nightly news tonight. We need to start sending resources there.

Sara: How many other people were on the desk with you?

Emily: It depends. It's staffed 24/7.

Sara: Okay.

Emily: So it really just depends. I always worked the morning shifts, so I worked at 5:00 AM so that's actually like a pretty stacked shift because it's just, there's so much going on throughout the day getting ready for the today show and nightly. Yeah. And then from

there again, I really like working with different teams, the thing I loved about that job was being able to work with all of our different regional teams and all of our different MSNBC teams and all of the shows. So now I work for the business and tech unit where, again, I also work with all of our different teams on different stories.

Emily: I have more agency to pitch the stories that I find interesting. I really like personal finance, so I tie that into a lot of what I do as well. We did a story for Weekend Nightly, that was our correspondent took a hundred robo calls in a day and actually did what you're not supposed to do with robo callers, which is engage with them, because we wanted to see what happens. So we were able to identify the four biggest types of scams. We were able to actually get to humans. And it was really fun and really interesting. And also a consumer friendly piece that has a lot of humor and is still useful and-

Sara: Relatable.

Emily: Right, it doesn't take itself too seriously.

Sara: Sure.

Matt: You talked about personal finance and you say you don't like to be in front of the camera yourself there, but you've done a little bit of writing.

Emily: That's true. But writing is not being in front of a camera.

Matt: So what is NBC better, what was that opportunity?

Emily: In my spare time at work, I was feeling, actually when I went from being an admin to being on the desk, I lost about 15 hours a week in work. So I had a lot of-

Sara: Free time.

Emily: Right. And especially I was getting out of work at like 2:00 PM so it's not like there was like, Oh yeah, I have like a robust social life now. It was like, no, I'm like sitting alone in my apartment for four hours until everyone else gets out of work. So I decided to start pitching to NBC News Better, which is the health and wellness vertical for NBCnews.com. So I've written, I like doing these personal finance, health and wellness experiments. I contribute to a series called, I Tried It, so I've done everything from cutting out booze for a month, to not using my credit card for a month, to like not spending any money at all for a month. I'm actually in the middle of one right now that I will not disclose. TBD. Keep an eye on NBC news.com/better.

Sara: What are some of the things that you learned at Fordham that you've been injecting into the work that you do now?

Emily: I mean, I think Fordham taught me to always keep a hand in everything. I loved being involved in so many different things. I feel like Fordham definitely taught me how to

multitask, how to compromise. I feel like as a student there were many conversations we had with the university sometimes, especially when it came to the theater club that I feel like it's interesting how much responsibility I was given as a 20 year old to manage a \$30,000 budget and to have conversations with vice presidents and student deans and all of these people and really run a small company. So learning all of that completely shaped how I work and how I am as a human and what things I find valuable in work and in my relationships with my colleagues and friends and everyone around me.

Sara: And you're still involved with the theater company, correct?

Emily: Well, yeah. I run the alumni association.

Sara: Okay.

Emily: Yeah. Because old habits die hard.

Matt: President of the Mimes and Mummies Alumni Association.

Emily: Yes.

Matt: Not to do a quick plug or anything for you, right?

Emily: Please come to our events. They're always a fun time.

Matt: I mean you talk about the folks who have to interact with on the admin side, American studies is a fascinating major. Any particular professors left an impact or a course that was particularly interesting?

Emily: I mean, I loved my American studies seminar with Christiana Zenner and Dennis Tyler. We had so much fun. Glenn Hendler taught our--now the course names are escaping me, but he was the director of the program when I first signed on for the major and he was wonderful. I keep in touch with Beth Knobel from the journalism department. She's fantastic. And it's funny like a lot of our professors will get booked as guests on MSNBC and I'll like really just, I've seen Christiana around and I've seen Beth Knobel around and have been like, "Hey, can I stop by and say hi?" It's really fun to have that kind of, to know the Fordham has great professors that are experts in their fields and are able to be use as guests, which is great.

Sara: And you did a Global Outreach project?

Emily: I did two, yes. I did GO! Navajo in 2013 and GO! Alaska in 2014 and they were great. And I actually think those experiences also inform my worldview in a big way. I'm very attuned to-

Matt: Yeah, how so?

Emily: I mean I feel like I-

Matt: You're not the first person to say that, but it's interesting to hear your perspective.

Emily: I mean I applied to projects very selectively because learning about the indigenous populations of this nation is really important to me and especially, there are stories that bubble up because a lot of those communities don't have a lot of resources. Like many of them are in food deserts and many of them have other issues that I won't get into here. But technology and business obviously affect those things and the government obviously affects those things. So there are definitely stories to be told within those communities that pertain to my current line of work. And it's just something I always keep an eye on.

Matt: So what's next for you?

Emily: Oh man, I just started this job.

Sara: Give her a chance!

Emily: I don't know.

Matt: What could be next?

Emily: I mean every career I've ever wanted since I was a little kid really came back to storytelling, right? When I was small, I wanted to be a writer and then I thought I maybe wanted to be a journalist and then I wanted to be a lawyer and then I want it to be all of these different things, but all of it came down to storytelling. So as long as I'm telling good stories and telling them well, I think that's what my forever next step will be.

Sara: What advice do you have for current students?

Emily: Oh man. Oh, I feel like I have so much. Do the mentoring program if you can.

Sara: Okay.

Emily: Have a real human grownup, look at your resume, who's out there in the world, in your field, and just like take advantage of all of this stuff. Like Fordham would not have been Fordham for me if I had only gone to class. If I had like, I can't even separate my Fordham experience from all of the clubs and activities that I did. And I think it's a great, college is a really formative time, obviously, and I think staying in New York has really helped this, but I feel like my Fordham friends are my closest friends and they are my support system. So just hold onto those people.

Sara: I feel like people have been an integral part of your journey because you've been able to sort of call on people who were in roles before you and sort of use your network to move around within your industry.

Emily: Right.

Sara: So it seems like you really are stressing the fact that you should keep connections and sort of value the relationships that you make along the journey.

Emily: Definitely. And especially when you're a student, you never know when your classmate or fellow intern or your whomever is going to become your boss one day. So it's really important to always be, always take the high road even if someone is being kind of horrible to you. Because sometimes 22 year olds are horrible to each other. Sometimes real grown ups are horrible to each other too.

Sara: Yes.

Matt: Never.

Emily: But yeah, that's definitely something that I found to be really important to always keep in mind that these people are going to be the, especially in the media industry. The industry is small, so always try to keep building those bridges wherever you go.

Matt: Emily, thanks so much for being here today.

Emily: Of course. Thank you guys so much for having me.

Sara: Well, that's another addition to Fordham Footsteps.

Matt: Fordham footsteps is brought to you by the Fordham University Alumni Association.

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