

Alumna excels behind the mic and in the classroom

Alumna Danielle McCartan '10 had no idea that one class would alter the course of her career. She was on track to graduate from Ramapo College with a degree in Italian studies and earn her teacher education certification. But she needed one more class to fulfill credit requirements so she enrolled in a sports media course. "It sparked an interest that I never even knew I had," says McCartan. But instead of switching gears, she chose to pursue careers in both teaching and broadcasting. That Wednesday night class eventually led to a weekend gig as an on-air host for WFAN Sports Radio. During the week, she teaches Italian at Franklin Avenue Middle School in Franklin Lakes, N.J.; then she coaches softball in the afternoon.

Busy? Just a bit, but we caught up with her.

Tell us about your experience as a student at Ramapo.

The Ramapo College experience was a perfect scenario for me. I was close enough to home [in Dumont, N.J.] for my mom to still cook meals for me to take back to school and to do my laundry! It was also far enough away so that I felt completely independent. Sure, I learned how to be a teacher and I perfected my Italian language skills in my study abroad program (Dr. Rosetta D'Angelo's Urbino program). But I also met many new people at Ramapo, many of them during my freshman year that I'm still very good friends with to this day--sixteen years later. I lived on campus all four years and was also President of Kappa Delta Pi, Vice President of Il Circolo Italiano (Italian club).

What is the best part about being a teacher?

The best part about being a teacher is that every single day is different. That's what makes it fun! I always feel lucky to have an inherent 'buy-in' with my students: after all, they had other world language options and they *chose* to take Italian. Nothing makes me happier than to hear my students tell me stories of how they were studying with their grandparents, how they were able to use what they learned on a summer vacation to Italy, and how they are beginning to ask questions about their family's heritage. That love of the language and of the culture is something that I strive to instill into every lesson I teach.

When did you get your first gig at WFAN?

My first gig at WFAN was a culmination of a lot of hard work, a lot of not taking 'no' for an answer, and a little sliver of luck. Before I even took WFAN's airwaves for a one-hour tryout during the 3 a.m. hour of one of Tony Paige's shows, I taught myself how to use GarageBand and iMovie, I set up an entire social media suite for myself (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and a YouTube channel), I interviewed close to two hundred professional athletes, I wrote articles for two blogs, I hosted a live radio show every Sunday morning at WRPR as an alumnus, and I had audited a sports media course at Ramapo. I never collected a single penny from any of this work. Then, through the power of Twitter, I found myself in a meeting with the then-program director, Mark Chernoff, who promised me that he'd 'give me a shot'. I was ecstatic; that's all I had been hustling toward: one shot, one opportunity to seize everything. All I needed was someone to crack open the proverbial door for me... and I knew I was going to bust it down. I will be forever grateful to Mr. Chernoff for that.

Do you prefer in-studio or on-the-field reporting?

Each place, in-studio in on-the-field, presents a unique experience. It's hard to choose one over the other. In the studio, I'm connecting directly with the diehard sports fans in our metro area (and beyond) and on the field, I'm talking directly with the athletes from whom people want to hear. Both arenas are exciting to me in different ways, so it's hard to choose!

Do you have a favorite sport to cover, and is there one moment that stands out?

I love all sports, really, but I especially love the minutiae of the game of baseball: the game-within-the-game, the chess match. The access that the Yankees and the Mets grant the members of the media is first-class. A moment that stands out to me came after a football game in the visiting team's press conference room at MetLife Stadium. The Giants were playing the Green Bay Packers in a snowstorm (the grounds crew, while the teams were at one end of the field, were running across the field with shovels at the other end to clear the yard lines of snow). My assignment was to record the post-game coach and "top player" press conferences. I was the only person standing near the exit door, and as future Hall of Fame quarterback Aaron Rodgers walked past me after his press conference, he said to me, "Get home safe". That was pretty cool.

You apparently love teaching, coaching, playing and your work. Do you have any time for hobbies?

Hobbies are hard to come by because my days are usually completely jam-packed. But I love going to concerts and all kinds of games as a fan. We have so many different teams in this area, it would be a shame not to get to see all of them play in-person. As far as concerts, I like most types of music. My favorite performer to see live is Lady Gaga- she is supremely talented. And I play shortstop for the Phillies in the Upper Saddle River women's league.

What advice can you give to Ramapo students who haven't yet decided on a definitive career path?

I'd say try everything. That motto is what originally started me on my sports media path. I had fulfilled all of my requirements, except for my actual number of credits, so, as a senior, I took that course in sports media on Wednesday nights. So really try to immerse yourself with everything Ramapo has to offer. I'm so glad that I did. What's the worst that can happen?