

The most important skill Derek Torno learned while at Hope was, “how to think about things.” As a 2003 graduate, Derek immediately began putting his Hope College education into practice at Gordon Food Service. He has already filled several roles—most recently as a product manager. Hope gave him the skills and perspectives to adapt well to these various roles.

Derek was both a Management and Computer Science major. **He clearly recognizes that the liberal arts education has allowed him to gain a better understanding of the interconnectedness of disciplines.** He can easily draw from the wide range of classes he took and use them in his daily work. Derek enjoys seeing, “how the business world interacts with the liberal arts.” Derek feels that the combination of different perspectives taught in both his liberal arts classes and those in his two majors gave him a competitive edge. Moreover, all these classes helped define and strengthen his natural talents and passions.

Derek’s talents and passions drew him to pursue a management major. The professors in the Department of Economics, Management and Accounting (DEMA) challenged him to define how he should approach daily problems and conflicts. Derek is convinced that “the unique part of Hope is that the professors take an interest in you. If something is wrong, they would ask, ‘What’s wrong and how can I help?’” The personal and intimate classrooms of Hope provided Derek with the setting to develop and enhance his education. Instead of just being able to give a textbook definition for a concept, Derek credits the DEMA program with providing him with a deep understanding and conceptual grasp of the theories taught.

Derek’s experience at Hope gave him the broad education needed to excel in many roles within the workplace. Derek credits his ability to think critically for his success at grasping new situations and making good decisions. Just three years into his career, Derek has been, “empowered to have a lot of responsibility, and the Hope College experience provided him with the needed confidence.” Derek acknowledges the importance of taking the small tasks and not only performing those well, but also seeing how they interact in the big picture. Derek understands how complex the business field can be, and therefore he encourages students to take advantage of a liberal arts education. This type of education, he says, provides the “flexibility to change,” and to “think critically about how the small and big picture interrelate.”