

Even though he majored in both economics and management and minored in computer science, Jesse Richardson says he still doesn't know it all. He experiences moments where even philosophy and art work their way into his job. "You start to apply everything into business." It is at times like these that Richardson, a '99 graduate, is grateful for the liberal-arts education he experienced at Hope College. "Sometimes I feel like my picture of the world is bigger than that of the other people I work with."

Richardson was attracted to Hope because the smaller size of the college provided opportunity for close relationships among faculty, students, and staff. Cultivating relationships is just one way that Hope prepared Richardson for his current career with Plante and Moran as an associate in litigation and valuations services. "I enjoy helping people and interacting with people. Hope gave me a chance to do that." Richardson points specifically to the Baker Scholars program as giving him such opportunities. "We were able to not only meet the people they brought in as speakers, but also on the trips we took. We were able to meet some really interesting people in the business field."

Another important way Richardson says he was prepared for a career in business was through the Department of Economics, Management, and Accounting (DEMA). "The professors never let you take the easy way out. They weren't going to just give you the answer; they made you dig for it. And when there was more than one answer they asked, 'What then is the *best* answer? What are the implications of this decision?' They train you to be critical thinkers." Richardson emphasizes that he feels he was prepared to be a critical thinker and that becoming a specialist is something you learn in the field; but to learn, you have to be willing to learn. "I had an initial love of learning, but the professors at Hope helped to direct it in a way that matched my interests."

He admits that there is a stereotype out there that business is a cut-throat arena, and while he believes that at times it can be, Richardson also believes that those entering the business field can use that stereotype as motivation to change the image. "Business ethics and Christian ethics can be integrated into a culture of a company. I'm fortunate to work for a company that carries the principles that Hope idealizes."

Richardson encourages freshmen to "immerse themselves into opportunities to do different things and to take different classes in order to find direction." When asked what advice he'd give graduating seniors, Richardson smiles as he responds, "You don't need to be worried about the next ten years because most likely it'll change. **View business as a calling and always be willing to learn.**"