

When asked how Hope College prepared him for a career in business, Gregg Gruizenga replies, “I know it sounds corny, but it was that liberal-arts education.” Gruizenga graduated in 1995 with a double major in Management and Engineering. “I think having more than one major or even a minor is of great benefit, no matter what field you go into.”

Gruizenga is a fourth generation Hope College graduate. “My son’s name is Kollen if that tells you anything,” he jokes, referring to the Kollen Hall dormitory on Hope’s campus. Regardless of the family ties to Hope College, Gruizenga feels an attachment to Hope due to the relationships he made while attending the college. “I’m a big believer in mentors. I still could learn so much more from [the Hope professors]. While I was here I created personal relationships that helped me to theorize and see how that all fits into the real world. I believe the best way to learn is from mentors. After Hope I created similar relationships as well as continuing the relationships I had made at Hope.”

He also credits the Baker Scholars program for preparing him for a career in business. “No single aspect of Hope prepared me more. It gave me an additional opportunity to have those mentors I was talking about. But, it also gave me a chance to meet local business people. The program taught me how to travel as a business person, how to have professional meetings, and just how to conduct myself as a business person. It is that grey area that you have to learn and the way to learn it is to experience it. The ‘real doing it’ is just as great as a degree.”

“Real doing” is why Gruizenga is grateful that he was able to do internships as well as the Baker Scholars program. He doesn’t discount classroom learning, however, because “Hope allows its professors to be a little unconventional.” The professors are, in Gruizenga’s opinion, “flexible, caring more about what we were learning as opposed to following some traditional curriculum.”

He once again emphasizes the importance of mentors when outlining his advice to incoming freshmen: “Take advantage of the opportunities to get to know professors who share your passion. The most important thing is to learn how to relate, how to live, how to co-exist with people—the world is made up of relationships. Find a mentor; don’t be afraid to ask someone to step into that role.”

Gruizenga’s advice to graduating seniors is simple: **“Follow a long-term vocation that fits your passion and not a short-term occupation that fits your pocketbook.”** One could say that Hope’s liberal arts education not only prepares students for many vocations, but also provides students the opportunity to find their passion.