

# Alumni Spotlight

## Christy (Colon) McEwen '09



Please provide your biographical information (major/minor at WCU, town you grew up in, reason why you came to WCU).

I grew up in Northeast Philadelphia and came to attend WCU because of a summer program that was offered to me by my high school counselor in 2003 (Lincoln High School of Philadelphia). I never gave college a second thought, but our counselor pulled me aside about an opportunity for a scholarship program that allowed me to live on campus for (2) weeks to gain college experience and partake in introductory college courses. The following year I completed the second portion of the program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The experience motivated me to apply for college and I was elated to have been accepted at WCU.

• What made you go into degree?

I came in undeclared. I remember telling the advisor that I just wanted to be creative and help people and I didn't know where I could go with that. After a year undeclared I decided I would go into teaching, but I knew that I didn't want to teach younger children. I wanted to help people who were in my same predicament. I wanted to help people who had no idea what they could achieve. After completing the summer programs my curiosity was ignited and I began to believe that my hard work could lead me to something successful and fulfilling.

• What is your official title and what are your responsibilities in your current position?

My official title is Digital Media Manager for EMI; Southern California's Leading LED Digital Signage Company. Our company encompasses a full sales team, with graphics designers and service technicians who combined have decades of knowledge in advertising, digital LED system engineering, and project management of the electronic digital displays that you see and engage with every day on the freeway, inside the stadium of your favorite sports team, and on kiosks at your local shopping centers.

My responsibilities include expertly crafting marketing campaigns, both digitally and tangibly, to expand our EMI brand and providing our executive team with metrics to report impact and return on investments. In short, I get to play around on photoshop all day and develop strategic digital sales campaigns for businesses like Toyota, Kaiser, and nationally recognized sports stadiums across the country.

I also oversee curation of all graphic designs and content programming schedules for clients like your local auto dealer or retail store that have purchased LED displays for their business. If you drove by it on the freeway, it is very likely our company designed that sign structure and programmed the digital content that is running on it.

• What is a typical day like at work?

In the summer of 2020, I relocated to the East Coast and begin managing the Programming and Marketing Departments remotely from my home. Each morning I log on and complete routine webcam checks on our freeway assets to ensure programming schedules are operating smoothly and audit the graphic content program to make sure anything that is live on the signs is looking sharp.

Next, I track and measure metrics and analytics for any campaigns we launched to ensure we are modifying as needed to result in higher website traffic, impressions, and conversion rates. Boring right? Well, it's gets more fun when everyone on the West Coast finally wakes up at 11am EST. Then my day is filled with meetings with ad agencies and clients to develop digital renderings of LED signs for their business and strategizing on programming schedules that can increase their revenue. I work with a powerhouse group of females who are all invested in their career and there is just something about that female comradery that keeps me motivated. I haven't found any team anywhere else where everyone is here to support you and encourage you to grow in your career.

• What have been the biggest challenges at work?

The biggest challenge to date was taking on my first sports stadium client in 2018. We were managing 9 of their assets in-house, providing content schedules for all their interior kiosks, and prepping for the installation of two of the largest freeway digital displays in Los Angeles. The entitlement process for the project took over a year but our Sales team did it and now it was up to the Programming Department to prove ourselves. In one day, I had to learn a completely new software that would control all the digital displays inside the stadium. I came prepared with my five-star notebook, blazer, and heels and was able to program the schedules for all their exterior boards. It was challenging and I was scared. I took my son with me to the grand opening match and felt an amazing sense of pride knowing that I played a part in such a monumental moment for Los Angeles. All the nights I spent in my

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dorm room and at the library strategizing on teaching techniques came in handy. I use a lot of the skills I learned as a teacher to pass along my knowledge to our growing team of designers and programmers.

- What do you enjoy most about your current position?

100% my favorite part is the creativity. I was an R.A. for 2.5 years at West Chester and main reason I took that job was so I could plan out and strategize successful events and fundraisers that educated our residents and most importantly keep it fun. Learning all the skills I did as a secondary education major have helped me tremendously because so many of us still think the same way we did when we were in high school. We need things broken down and explained in a way that we can interpret and take ownership. I do a lot of that through design. I conceptualize ideas and design them out on my computer and then work with a team of geniuses (as I like to call them) to make the impossible come true. Although designing/drawing is one of my favorite parts of my job; resolving an issue through strategy and creativity – that's what brings me the most joy.

- What skills, talents, and other traits are useful and necessary to do your job?

As I didn't go to school for arts, the first thing I had to do was learn how to properly design. Adobe offers a lot of opportunities to learn their design software on your own. I was lucky that EMI supported and provided me with professional and certified training on Adobe Creative Suite. Working in marketing and with clients it is useful to be a "people person". I listen to my clients a lot more than I talk to them because I want to make sure I'm offering them the best solution to their problem. A lot of my listening and public speaking skills I retained from the communications courses I took as part of my electives at West Chester.

- Do you have a favorite or funny story about work?

Yes. I recently relocated to California with my husband because of his job. I was looking for work and didn't have a California teaching certification yet, so I was looking for something administrative to get me by until then. My car's oil pan cracked the day of my interview, so my husband had to ride me in on his motorcycle. I wore a brown blazer, flats, and a leather suitcase. I had him drop me off across the street and hid my helmet under a chair in the waiting room so they wouldn't notice. After my interview, the supervisor noticed the helmet and asked, "is that yours?" I said yes and the next day she called to tell me I had the job. I'm convinced that the helmet helped me stand out and that's why I got the job.

- What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Well, you shouldn't be surprised that on my spare time I still enjoy being creative. In 2020 I started posting "Cocktails at Home" videos on my social media accounts. A received a lot of positive feedback from friends and colleagues and continue to film, edit, and promote my BoomCheers Cocktails at Home videos today. I completed my Bartender's Certification in 2021 at Columbia Bartending Agency's School of Mixology in New York City. I like taking on my own little projects. My junior year at West Chester I completed the training and became a DJ for WCUR – Hip Hop with Ms. Colon Thursday nights at 6pm.

- Where do you see yourself in five years?

Chief Marketing Manager for EMI Nationwide. Running operations for all marketing and programming departments across the U.S. Also, hopefully a mom of (2). And hey, why not ask for a few hundred more followers on TikTok, too?

- What advice would you give to a current student who aspires to follow in your footsteps and pursue a similar career path?

Take pride in what you choose to major in. Trust me, it is going to help you in whatever path you choose. I'm not sitting here using my teaching degree as intended but I certainly wouldn't be here without it.

- How has your WCU education contributed to your success?

I reflect a lot on how much effort had to go into preparation prior to presentation. I majored in English and Secondary Education so I was reading A LOT. Designing is super fun but you need purpose in order to make a living off of it. My courses, professors, and even my on-campus supervisors (did I mention I worked at Sykes?) helped me build the work ethic I have today that thankfully allow me to be both creative and analytical.

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- What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments (both personally and professionally)?

This has nothing to do with my career or education. My husband, Evan, and my son, Cash, are my greatest accomplishments. My husband has always been by my side (17 years) to encourage me at the lowest points of my career and my son reminds me every day that I work too hard, and I need to play. He helps bring balance to my life which took a hell of a long time to finally get here. After nearly a decade I feel confident in my position, my industry knowledge, and the fact that I recognize we all still have a lot to grow. I'm back in school now to get my certification in Graphic Design from NYIAD (New York Institute of Art & Design).

- What's your favorite memory from when you were a student at WCU?

My friends. I made lifelong friends whose personal accomplishments bring me as much joy, if not more, than my own.