

Syracuse student takes an unusual path to public relations

By Jera Strony

Ask Syracuse University student Rachael DiLieto about her academic journey so far, and she'll laugh, saying it was anything but smooth and straightforward. Her journey looped through the worlds of engineering and political science before finally coming to rest in public relations.

"While I enjoyed engineering and political science, I just knew neither major was my path." DiLieto says. "Something was missing, and I couldn't figure out what it was." As it turns out, the "something missing" was the world of public relations.

Originally from New York City, a hub for innovation and the arts, DiLieto grew up immersed in an environment buzzing with culture and creativity. Her mother, an artist, instilled in her an appreciation for self-expression and individuality.

DiLieto recalls spending time in her mother's art studio as a young girl. "I remember teaching myself to skateboard in the studio. I was definitely a tomboy, but I was always encouraged to express myself in whatever way felt most natural," she says.

At first, DiLieto thought she might follow in her mother's footsteps, potentially becoming an artist herself. However, she quickly realized her talents didn't lie in painting or sculpting but rather in connecting with people.

In high school, working in hospitality confirmed for DiLieto that she thrived in environments that permitted her to interact, listen and learn from others.

Still, like many seniors in high school, DiLieto didn't know how being a people person translated to a career.

DiLieto tried political science. "At first, I chose political science to fuel my passion for working with people, but I soon realized it lacked the creativity I had been searching for," says DiLieto.

It wasn't until DiLieto took a public relations class at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications that all the pieces snapped together.

“I knew this was finally where I was supposed to be. PR allows me to pursue any area of interest, whether it be sports, art or politics, while being able to utilize my creativity and showcase interpersonal skills and innovation,” says DiLieto.

Though she has only been a PR student for a short time, DiLieto’s drive led her to land an internship at Shore Fire Media, a leader in creative communications.

“Shore Fire encompassed my passions, gave me experience in creative communications, and allowed me to work closely with artists and entertainers,” DiLieto says.

DiLieto’s skillset and drive impressed the Shore Fire Media team so much that she received an offer to return next summer. The offer not only reflected her talent within PR, but it also solidified that her winding path had finally led exactly where it was meant to be.

“It may have taken me longer than most to find the right fit,” DiLieto reflects, “but every stop along the way has only strengthened my dedication to public relations.”

While it may not have been straightforward, DiLieto’s journey shows the road to success isn’t always straight and narrow. Instead, it’s the curves, bumps and side roads that shape the skills and perspective needed when the right road finally appears.

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The following information is not intended to be factual but is a class writing assignment from August 2025 to December 2025 at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University. All information is intended to be sourced appropriately.