

feature story

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WRITTEN BY DAWN MARTIN

In the New York GROOVE

BURAKE TESHOME
'22 (Marketing)

Sometimes Burake Teshome '22 (Marketing) still can't believe where her UNC Greensboro Bryan School of Business and Economics marketing degree has taken her. Two years after crossing the stage at graduation, she is walking some of the biggest red carpets of New York and Los Angeles.

As an associate social media manager for Vanity Fair, Teshome monitors and helps shape the magazine's coverage of global news – from celebrity gossip and the Oscars to election news and general pop culture. Her work includes the chance to interview celebrities at premieres and awards shows, including some of the stars she's seen on TV and movie screens for years.

"Even now sometimes I'm walking to the office, and I think, 'This is crazy,'" she says. "I never particularly saw myself in rooms like this, so when I started there was a bit of imposter syndrome. But in that same breath, it feels like a really perfect place for me. It's an intersection of all the things I'm interested in – movies, TV, pop culture, the geopolitical state of the world."



Practice Makes Perfect

Her time at the Bryan School "made the idea of having a marketing career after college very tangible and real," Teshome says. Professors like Dr. Sara Macsween, a lecturer in the Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism, brought real-world experience into the classroom, requiring students to build marketing plans from the ground up. This meant analyzing data to identify customers, then developing targeted strategies and creating content that ranged from direct mail pieces and email blasts to social posts and promotional videos. Teshome built a strong knowledge of sales and marketing and paired that with the creativity needed to make ideas stick, Macsween says.

"Burake was a very strong student. People are drawn to her very warm and outgoing personality, and she has very strong public speaking skills. I'm not surprised she landed this job because she is very good with people, organized, creative and detailed."

Empire State of Mind

On a typical day at Vanity Fair, Teshome begins scanning her phone for news and items of interest as soon as she wakes up. Part of her responsibility is to make sure the magazine's editors and writers are up to date and briefed on any online buzz and conversations that may interest their readers. She contributes to newsroom meetings, posts content daily on the magazine's social feeds, and promotes the magazine's digital site and print edition. "It means making sure our tweets are going out on time; working in collaboration with our video team to enhance our TikTok content; and in general just ensuring our unique Vanity Fair voice is well represented across social, all while preparing the robust social rollouts for each print issue and planning ahead for VF-centric tentpoles, like the Oscars and our annual Hollywood cover."



People may be surprised at the amount of strategy, time and planning that goes into producing and promoting each magazine issue and its associated features, she says.

"I have always wanted to be somewhere that starts the conversation," she says. "I'm really grateful to work somewhere that creates culture." Once, when she was on a plane returning from the Oscars, she noticed a woman across the aisle reading Vanity Fair's Hollywood Issue. She took a photo and shared it with her colleagues. "I said, 'Our culture footprint is everywhere.'"

Since her first red carpet experience at the Met Gala in New York, Teshome has had the opportunity to interview a variety of celebrities. Among the most friendly and personable: Anne Hathaway, Daniel Radcliffe and one of her favorites, Tony Winner and Glee star Jonathan Groff.

Teshome's first job in New York was an internship with Nasdaq during her junior year. While she wasn't particularly interested in finance, she was impressed with the caliber of the social team there. "I thought, 'These women I want to surround myself with,'" she said. "They are the kind of women I want to become. They have the work experiences that I want to emulate."

One of those women stayed in touch with Teshome, a connection that eventually led to Teshome's hiring at VF. "It's a privilege to work with my colleagues – they are all people I deeply admire," she says. "Everyone is remarkably well rounded and highly intelligent."

Her future goals include continuing to learn and grow at Vanity Fair and perhaps within the larger Conde Nast brand, but for now she's enjoying the pace of life in New York amidst a news cycle that never stops. "I feel honored that I was asked to be a small part of such a legacy publication," she says, "and I'm soaking it all in like a sponge." ■

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