

Student Stories Project: Liz Buchanan

Audio version available at:

<http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/buchanan.shtml>

[IU fight song]

Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I am your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here on the Bloomington campus, from the perks –

“When we did a Katrina event, people – a group of people that pulled together an organization that could benefit something so great – it was amazing to see.”

– to the hard work –

“... Pushing me a lot more, it's – my initiative's gone way up, especially with so much on my plate right now.”

– to the memories that will last a lifetime.

“I was in a photo op with coach Hep ...”

“... ten-year reunion was just, it was a lot of fun. It was great to see 30-plus guys come back for the show.”

Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.

[IU fight song]

SALATA: Today we're speaking with Liz Buchanan of Ladies First.

BUCHANAN: My name is Liz Buchanan. I am a senior majoring in marketing and business law from South Bend, Indiana. I am the current business manager of Ladies First. My interests mostly lie within singing groups on campus and business organizations.

Why did you choose to attend IU?

I chose to attend IU based on the reputation of the Kelley School of Business. I got in as a direct-admit freshman because I kind of just wasn't sure what I wanted to do and picked business – I thought it would be universal. And so when I ended up getting in immediately and with the reputation of the school, I decided this was the place to go.

Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you've had at IU.

Rushing and joining Alpha Phi: it's been a big part of my college experience. I've met my closest friends, a lot of them, through that organization, and I think Greek life is just wonderful.

What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IU?

I would say to get involved as soon as you can, meet as many people as you can, and definitely try to break away from your high school group of friends as much as you can. Look for things that you know you're excited about, and even if it's not something you necessarily want to do for all four years, it'll definitely start to build your social network. So get involved as soon as you can.

How did you find out about Ladies First, and why did you decide to become a member?

When I came to IU the first week, I auditioned for a singing group called the Singing Hoosiers, and it's huge on campus. Singing had been something that I'd been doing since I was little and wanted to do when I came here as well. And a lot of the girls who were in Ladies First were involved in Singing Hoosiers, and so I kind of just heard about it through them and they encouraged me to audition. A cappella is huge on a lot of campuses, and it isn't as big at IU, actually, as it is at some schools. For instance, University of Pennsylvania, which has a tiny population compared to IU, has, like, 10 a cappella groups – and we have two, and we have 40,000 students. I knew that being a part of maybe one of the only groups it was possible to be a part of would be an awesome opportunity and we'd have a lot of opportunity to perform because there'd be a high demand. So I definitely auditioned. It was great that I made it. It's also been a big part of my college, I guess, experience. I came here and these girls who I was friends with through Singing Hoosiers just said, "This is an awesome thing." It's music that's different and kind of fun, and it's not choral music: it's anything that we want to sing, we can arrange, and we can perform, and it's stuff that people will be really familiar with, Top 40 stuff, so it's been really great.

What are your responsibilities as business manager of Ladies First?

Well, I get to hang out at the IUAA a lot. I guess my responsibilities as business manager mostly lie in booking shows and doing reimbursements, making sure that we don't go broke, fun things like that. Because it is student-run, sometimes it is difficult to, I guess, reinforce leadership or goals over your peers, so the role is important just in that you lead by example – so I think that's also one of the biggest responsibilities, because I've been in this group for three years and this year we had a huge turnover with people who graduated, so almost half of our group are new girls. So it's important just to lead by

example and make sure that when I do leave, being one of the leadership roles, that people will maybe remember that and the group will continue running as it has.

Tell me about a Ladies First event or program that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.

Well, I would definitely say that last year's performance at the IU Auditorium was a big deal for our group, especially because the women's groups kind of across the country don't necessarily get the recognition that the men's groups do. I guess that's just kind of like the fault of the system – that's just kind of how it is. We don't have a lot of the same capabilities that the men's groups do – our voices just don't sound the same, we don't have the range. We're so happy to be allied with Straight No Chaser because they did help us form our group seven years ago. At the same time, we've never had the opportunity to perform at the IU Auditorium – that was our first performance there. The only other time that we've even done a performance on a big stage like that was when we opened our very first show: we sang one song for Straight No Chaser seven years ago as their opening act. So it was a big thing for us as a group, just a hurdle that we jumped, kind of, in proving that we could do a show there and we could get an audience that was one that we were proud of to come. And it wasn't huge, by any means, but it was great because it was the people that we cared most about being there, and we were able to get some of the girls who had been in the group when it formed to come back, and so it was neat from all angles, I guess. That's why I'm most proud of it.

How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in Ladies First?

Well, I think the biggest one has probably just been that I've learned to be more patient. I've also learned how to express things in a positive light when things are maybe not necessarily so positive that are happening. When you have 13 girls who are in a performance group, sometimes things can get a little catty, and that's just the nature of it, but it's definitely taught me that everybody's different – everybody has different interests and different wants, and they're not always aligned with mine – so I need to be more patient in dealing with people and more understanding. A lot of times also I've learned that people's immediate actions are a reaction to something else that's going on in their life. And just really getting to know the girls – and they are my closest friends, probably, here outside of the sorority – just a different group of friends. It's important to get to know each of them first as people and then as members of this group, and it's really helped facilitate things in the way that they run. People have more ownership, and it's just – it's taught me a lot about being a good leader.

What have you gained through your interactions with IU alumni?

Well, definitely last year's reunion and planning it was an interesting experience for me, because I didn't know *any* of the original girls. There were a couple of girls in last year's group who did know some of the alumni, and so it was great for me as business manager at the time just to be working with them, and to talk to them and get to know what they

were interested in, and more than anything it reinforced why Ladies First is around and what it meant when it first started, and I guess just the way that it's developed and changed. It was really interesting to see, because I came into it just thinking, hey, this is a group that a lot of girls in Singing Hoosiers are involved with – it's probably been around for forever, it probably has never had trouble at any point in its history – and that's absolutely not the case. There have been a lot of things that have happened that have made the group stronger, and I guess I've learned a lot of that firsthand from being able to speak with a lot of these girls who now live across the country and encourage them to come back. I was proud, too, to have been able to carry on a strong tradition and to show them that, you know, the work that you started seven years ago hasn't died and that the group is really strong still and that we sound good and that people were really still enthusiastic about it. The group also performs at a lot of chapter events, so we get the opportunity just to go and visit different either regional campuses or alumni events that happen at different IUAA chapters.

What other organizations are you a part of here at IU?

Also Alpha Phi, and then the biggest – probably the biggest thing second to Ladies First is the Global Sales Leadership Society. It's a marketing group, a very strong part of the Kelley School of Business, and probably about 50 members. It's a really interesting organization. My role in that organization is very similar to my role in Ladies First. I just facilitate a lot of the operation of the group.

What are your future goals, and how do you think IU has helped prepare you to meet those goals?

I'll be graduating in May. I had an internship this past summer with General Mills; I was in kind of a sales/marketing role for them, for their Kroger office in Cincinnati, and so I will either be taking a job with them or with another company that does a similar thing – another consumer-products company. My goals in that respect are very heavily career-oriented, and there isn't really any better experience than having been the business manager of a group and dealing with a small group of people and leading an organization. In a way, our group kind of functions as a business. IU in itself has prepared me: just a great education; the reputation of Kelley is excellent; I've had the opportunities that I've had to have internships and that sort of thing because of IU – but at the same time, things I've been involved in have been most important and I'd say that Ladies First is always at the top of my list when I'm talking about things in interviews, because it's a unique experience: it's something that I don't think a lot of people have been able to have, and it's something a lot of business students aren't interested in – and that's the unique thing about our group, too, is there are not very many music majors. I think we only have three of 13. It's an outlet, I guess, for your stress, and something that if people have been singing their entire lives but don't necessarily want to do it professionally, it's something to maintain that. That's what it's been for me.

What will you miss the most when you graduate?

Oh, goodness. Well, Bloomington in the fall. It's beautiful. I think I'm definitely just going to miss having people around me 24/7. I've lived in a house of 100 girls, you know, for the past three years. I've had the opportunity to go and be with 13 close friends eight hours a week, three times a week, plus, for the past three years as well, so – it's going to be weird to move to a big city, and you know, kind of be on my own. I think IU is a great place for social networks, and I know that a lot of people – if I do end up in Chicago or Cincinnati or wherever I end up, I'll know people, and that'll be great because it'll keep a little piece of IU with me. At the same time, I will be one of those dedicated alumni who comes back. I already know that about myself. But yeah, I'm going to miss a lot about IU.

We've been talking with Liz Buchanan of the IU Bloomington women's a cappella group, Ladies First.

[IU fight song]

This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.

[IU fight song]