

## Ingram Scholar Alumni Spotlight



**KATIE ULLMANN**, Class of 2013

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### **DEGREES**

B.A. American Studies, Vanderbilt University

### **CURRENT LOCATION**

New York City

### **CURRENT EMPLOYER**

Antenna Group

### **CURRENT OCCUPATION**

Marketing & Communications

### **DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER PATH**

Early on in life, I knew I wanted to focus my career on clean energy. After learning about climate change in high school, I became all-in on promoting a cleaner energy future. I was awarded the Ingram Scholarship for my high school environmental activism and continued this work in Nashville throughout college.

My activist network led me to my first job, an early-stage solar startup in Oakland, California, called Mosaic. This job showed me that the skills I'd been using in my environmental activism (writing blog posts, press announcements, and op-eds; running social media pages; making videos, organizing and promoting events, and more) were valuable Communications & Marketing skills in a business setting. I'm grateful I started my career at a fast-growing early stage startup because I got a lot of responsibility to execute my own ideas and manage a strategy, which jump-started my career.

Next, I was recruited to a large solar developer, Conergy, where I served as Director of Global Communications & Marketing. I moved to Miami for the job. Overseeing a team of Communications & Marketing leaders, I learned a tremendous amount about management and marketing solar across the world. It was an incredible experience.

I left Conergy and moved to New York without a full-time job in place, excited to explore the burgeoning clean tech startup scene in the big city. I started working on an idea I had for a clean energy product with an engineer while also doing freelance Communications & Marketing consulting. Through my freelance consulting business, I had the opportunity to work with Google X and join a team of two who were starting a home geothermal heating & cooling startup, Dandelion. I had the opportunity to lead the press launch of this new brand and a marketing strategy that attracted thousands of customers. This challenging role taught me to think more strategically than ever before.

After Dandelion and a couple of subsequent startups, I started to better understand myself. I loved executing Communications & Marketing strategies for clean energy companies, but I didn't seem to like staying at any one company for a long time. Joining a Communications & Marketing consulting agency, where I could serve multiple clean energy clients at once, became the obvious next step.

I was fortunate to land a role as a Senior Director at the Antenna Group, the leading Communications & Marketing agency for the clean energy industry. I work with a variety of companies – big, small, national, international, in finance, hardware, software and more – all working on solutions to climate change and I manage teams of smart and passionate people. I feel incredibly lucky to say I love my job.

## **HOW DID THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY?**

The Ingram Scholars Program's Wednesday meetings prepared me to reflect on and articulate what I was learning through my service as well as to help others do the same. As a Communications consultant, a big part of my job is helping business leaders reflect and articulate what they are learning. In my work, we then polish their reflections into insights and opinions shared in op-eds or press interviews. Today, with COVID-19, we are all experiencing unprecedented uncertainty and many leaders are scared to say anything. Having the courage to continue moving business forward and sharing tips on how to keep business alive during this tough time is more important than ever. The Ingram Scholars Program prepared me to ask hard

questions and gather important insights regularly, through thick and thin. This has helped me encourage my clients to share what they are learning in an honest and sensitive manner during these challenging times.

**IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM IN THREE WORDS WHAT WOULD THEY BE?**

The Best People

**WHAT DOES THE INGRAM SCHOLAR COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?**

When I think of the Ingram Scholar Community, I think of the wisdom in the Albert Schweitzer quote we got on our Ingram graduation plaques: “the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” At times, any one of us individually will get caught up in the superficialities of the world, but the Ingram Scholar Community will always have a collective consciousness around what matters.

**BEST INGRAM SCHOLAR MEMORY**

I have great memories from my Ingram Summer Project with Drew Cornagie in the Pacific Islands, educating communities about how climate change was eroding their homeland and how they could have a say in what happened to them. The day of our pinnacle workshop on the Marshall Islands was particularly memorable. In the weeks leading up to this day, I contracted a skin infection from walking around barefoot on the island (shoes are important!) and ended up in the ICU. I was stable, but still in the hospital and couldn’t walk on the day of the workshop. Drew somehow got a wheelchair and permission to take me out for a few hours, so I was able to lead parts of the workshop as planned.

**WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS WHO WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR INGRAM SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE?**

Commit to getting to know your fellow scholars. Ingram Scholars are still among my best friends in the world. Going through the Ingram Scholar experience together forged deep, loving friendships that I wouldn’t trade for anything.