

# A Chat with Stewart Manges

SENIOR/DOUBLE MAJOR  
RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE PROGRAM  
FINANCIAL PLANNING PROGRAM  
OLIVET COLLEGE

## How did you get interested in insurance careers?

I'll admit. It was a fluke. No one in my family had ever been in the insurance business. When I was going to Flushing High School, my friend Andy told me about a program through the Genesee Career Institute. He was earning free college credit and attending classes on the insurance industry during school hours at Pioneer State Mutual Insurance Company. So I enrolled and attended classes there. After just one year, I had earned college credit for three classes and my AINS designation, too.

I really liked the program and was excited about continuing my studies at Olivet. Everyone from the instructors to the guest speakers to other students were extremely welcoming and fun to be around. My parents were happy that I earned free college credit in high school, but were most excited I had found my own path. I can say with confidence that going into the high school program, and now attending Olivet, were the best decisions I ever made.

## How has college jumpstarted your career? Have you done any internships?

Olivet reached out to me about career-building opportunities even

before I graduated high school. They offered me the chance to attend the Gamma Iota Sigma conference in Dallas, and encouraged me to enter a scholarship competition. The combination of those two things, plus their solid insurance and financial planning programs, was simply too much to pass up. I graduated high school in 2017, and started at Olivet that fall.

I've had two internships so far. The first was at Pioneer State Mutual shortly after high school. The second has been at the Accident Fund in Lansing. Both experiences taught me a lot. My first internship gave me a great overview of how the industry works. My second internship focuses on loss control. I've gone out to a lot of different businesses and industries and am learning about the various risks they face. It's fascinating and I'm seriously considering a loss control path for my career.

## Some people think working in insurance is dull, or even downright boring. What do you say to that?

Working in the industry was not something I even thought of or would have even considered. But the high school program, my col-



When I was going to Flushing High School, my friend Andy told me about a program through the Genesee Career Institute. He was earning free college credit and attending classes on the insurance industry during school hours at Pioneer State Mutual Insurance Company.

lege courses, and the internships have changed my perception a hundred times over.

I can't think of a single experience that hasn't been positive. I also can't think of a single person I've met in the industry who is not thoroughly engaged in their work. Everyone has decent senses of humor and they keep things lively. They're also interested in helping others, and have a lot of opportunity to do that because of the very nature of the business.

With insurance, you're offering products and services that protect people, their belongings and their families. The insurance business also helps all sizes and types of businesses reduce risks and losses – which protects people, too. For me, it feels good to be in a business with that kind of orientation.

I have literally seen people's eyes roll back when you mention you're in insurance. But I have

KNOW AN INDUSTRY  
STUDENT OR NEW AGENT  
WHO'D LIKE TO CHAT  
WITH US? EMAIL TERRI  
[tbettinger@michagent.org](mailto:tbettinger@michagent.org)

helped change their perceptions by mentioning the tremendous opportunities, the amazing people, and the variety of work in a stable, financially solid industry.

**Tell us about your volunteer work and how it relates to your career and studies.**

I've served as the Vice President of Community Services for the Gamma Iota Sigma chapter at Olivet. We've done a myriad of things, including adopting and cleaning up a section of the highway. We also participated with the Alliance for the Great Lakes in a beach cleanup. We did a couple of events at the Greater Lansing Food Bank, and another with the Tri-County Office on Aging. We also play euchre on Thursday afternoons with residents of a local home for seniors.

Volunteering just feels good. It's a great way to be part of your community and to contribute to the well-being of society. I've been doing it since high school. The volunteer and community aspect of the insurance business is just another reason why this career is such a good fit, and why I would recommend anyone check out the industry. ●



*Ann Kammerer is a freelance writer living in East Lansing. She has written extensively about business people, educators, artists and everyday*

*citizens doing good things.*