

"She is clothed in strength, and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future." – Proverbs 31:25

There often comes a time in life when you have the opportunity to either stay in your comfort zone or take a leap of faith and grasp for more. For Peace College alumna Kelly Rains Jesson '01, the answer was simple: take the risk.

Jesson graduated in 2001 with an Associates degree. At the time, Peace didn't offer a four-year Political Science degree. So, Jesson transferred to NC State University and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, *magna cum laude*. She then went to work for the U.S. Attorney's Office, later enrolling in the University of Miami's School of Law where she earned her J.D., *summa cum laude*, alongside classmate and her future husband, Edward Jesson.

For several years, the couple stayed in Florida. Kelly worked as a Law Clerk in the Third District Court of Appeals and as a Litigation Associate for a private law firm, while Edward worked as a judicial intern before becoming an Associate for two firms over a period of

years. But, it was in October 2015 that Kelly and Edward would gather their courage and take a chance on each other. They relocated to Kelly's home state of North Carolina, settling in Charlotte, and established their own law firm last year, Jesson & Rains, LLP.

"I credit Peace 100 percent for why I am outspoken, assertive, and opinionated," Kelly said. "I remember not speaking up in class in high school. At Peace, the classes were small, and the professors called on you. You were forced to be prepared and engaged in class."

Not only did Kelly become a more confident young woman in college, she also created lasting friendships. One of the things she loved most was making friends at Peace. "Everyone was new when we arrived. No one really knew each other beforehand, and since we all lived in the same three buildings, you got to know each other pretty well."

Kelly's roots at Peace run deeper than her experiences as a student. Her mother, Sue Lambert, has worked full-time for the school's business office for 28 years. Going to school at

the same place your mother works could be a recipe for disaster. Instead, it worked out well.

"At the time, it probably annoyed me," Jesson said. "If I didn't go to class, mom found out, but it was also good because it felt like I wasn't really going away to college. I could stop in and see my mom whenever I wanted."

Sue was also pleased. "Kelly would come by the office to see me. I don't believe she was weirded out about it. Both of us had our schedules with classes and work."

Sue also saw Peace's impact on the woman Kelly would become. "I've seen and heard Kelly say several times she wouldn't be the woman she is today had she not attended Peace, and I agree."

To current and prospective students, Kelly advises them to make the most of their time at WPU. "School's expensive, so get your money's worth and set yourself apart from those hurrying to just get a piece of paper. Invest in the experience, study hard, and get involved in campus life. You're in control, so take risks to gain the rewards."

SARAH KORDULEWSKI '11

By Christiane Newell '15

For Sarah Kordulewski, an alumna from the Class of 2011, lessons in leadership and creativity instilled in her as a student at Peace College helped prepare her for a successful career in technology.

"Peace really fostered a strong sense of leadership in me," Kordulewski said. "There was such encouragement to be creative, think outside the box, innovate, and forge one's own path. WPU inspired all of these things. I think that's really important in any career path, but especially careers in the field of technology."

For the past four and a half years, Kordulewski has worked for ShareFile, an enterprise file syncing and sharing software service founded by Duke graduate Jesse Lipson. Based in downtown Raleigh, ShareFile is owned by global technology leader Citrix Systems, Inc., since its acquisition in 2011.

"In the world of software, you really have to be open-minded and willing to bend because

the landscape is constantly evolving, and if you aren't willing to do things differently and push for growth, then you turn into a dinosaur," she said. "My Peace education definitely prepared me for that and promoted a sense of 'you can do anything' within me."

When Kordulewski began working for ShareFile, she started in small and medium business sales. She was quickly promoted into enterprise sales, when the ShareFile Enterprise product offering was fairly young in the market. She has worked with enterprise organizations around the globe by helping them uncover and solve challenges around data security and mobility. But, her passion is working with new initiatives and new products going to market. Last year she took on a leadership role, and now is building and managing a mid-market sales team.

Kordulewski graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and a minor in Psychology. She was a transfer student who, like many, was immediately drawn to Peace by its nurturing and closely knit environment. As an alumna, Kordulewski gives back to WPU and in 2015 was invited to join the Alumni Board.



"Peace was such a treasured part of my life, and I wanted give back and get more involved," she said. "It's been a lot of fun and an honor, especially during this pivotal point in our history."

Kordulewski advises future and new graduates to not let their degree's area of focus limit them. "Keep an open mind, because I had no idea when my undergraduate studies were over that I'd be doing what I'm doing now and loving it. So, engage in the WPU community, learn from faculty mentors and others, and strengthen your networks, because that's where most opportunities will present themselves."