



Jennifer Vincent

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Kraft Foods

B.S. - Food Science, 2002; UW-Madison

“Discover a career that you are passionate about. It will improve not only the quality of your work, but also the quality of your life.”

- Jennifer Vincent

Jennifer Vincent was paying attention the day a UW-Madison alumnus spoke to her high school chemistry class about working in the food science industry. During the talk, she discovered a field where science, math and creativity meet, and set her sights on pursuing a similar career track. Today, in addition to being a scientist at Kraft Foods in Madison, Wis.,

When Jennifer entered UW-Madison, she attached herself to the food science department, and immediately joined the UW Food Science Club in order to get involved in the field. Through the club, Jennifer obtained a summer internship with Kraft, which gave her professional experience while still in school.

After three years of working for Nestle USA, Jennifer applied and was hired as a Research and Development Scientist for Kraft Foods. “Interning with Kraft while I was in school definitively helped me later secure my position there,” she says.

Currently, Jennifer leads a group charged with improving existing Kraft products. When her team takes on a product, they evaluate multiple, complex factors—from marketing and packaging ideas to financial feasibility and quality assurance measures. She interacts with a range of different departments to ensure the success of the final product.

Jennifer spends a lot of time in the pilot plant formulating and reformulating products, but she also works outside of Kraft’s Madison facility. “I often travel to other plants to help them implement our product line at their factory,” she says. She also works closely with Kraft’s sensory department, observing consumer panels to assess public acceptance of new products.

Developing new products can be tough; according to industry statistics it’s estimated that over 95 percent of new products fail in their first year. While this is a scary statistic for a product developer, Jennifer says that “good communication helps you work through problems, keep team morale high, and ultimately find a solution.”

While an undergraduate, she took on various leadership and service positions, such as being a Short Course House Fellow and a CALS Ambassador, that have been vital to her professional success. Through these commitments, she was also asked to join the WALSAA Board of Directors:

“WALSAA played a big role in my education, from being a CALS Ambassador to providing me with scholarships,” Vincent describes. “I was happy to give back to the organization, and I’ve really enjoyed the opportunity to make a difference in not only the college but also other student’s lives.”

Jennifer encourages students to think hard about where their professional interests lie: “Discover a career that you are passionate about. Life is something to enjoy. When you find a job that you don’t dread going to each day, it will improve not only the quality of your work, but also the quality of your life.”