

Interview with Aimee Vero
Introduction to American Studies, Fall 2010

Occupation: Sales Associate, Tech Bookstore

Time: 4 p.m. – 4:24 p.m.

Place: Payne Residence Hall, Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewer: Dorothy Vu, Sophomore Communication Major from Fairfax, Virginia

DV = Dorothy Vu

AV = Aimee Vero

DV: Will you please state your name and if you don't mind, your age?

AV: My name is Aimee Vero and I'm 24 years old

DV: Will you please tell me your job title, the name of the organization you work for, and how long you've been working there?

AV: Um, I'm a Sales Associate at the Tech Bookstore um, and I've been working there for about a year.

DV: Can you describe your family background like where you grew up and what it was like there?

AV: Um, I grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina. Um, I went to a Catholic school for most of my schooling. Um, we were middle class so we had you know, regular house-not too fancy not too whatever.

DV: Okay, what did your parents do for a living?

AV: Um, my mother is a chemical engineer. She works for a company called Goldstone Technology. This is where she is in charge of quality insurance. Um, My dad has worked at a few different locations but most of it is um, mechanical engineering stuff um, like fixing things or just making sure different things work in either like schools or just hotels or other office buildings.

DV: Did your parents ever want you to follow in their footsteps?

AV: Um, I think they just pretty much wanted me to do whatever I wanted to do or whatever I thought you know, I wanted to do. They never pressured me to follow in any kind of engineering or a science. They just wanted me to do what I enjoyed doing.

DV: So tell me about your job, how did you come to get the job in the first place?

AV: Um, I was just applying for a job one of the summers here in Blacksburg and one of my sorority sisters actually got a job there before I did and she told me I should apply there as well.

So I had applied at the Tech Bookstore and a couple other places and I had some interviews, but Tech Bookstore was the one that hired me pretty much on the spot.

DV: What's a typical day at your job like?

AV: Um, usually it's helping customers when they can't find anything um or if there's something out on the floor that they would like to purchase but they cant find, I usually help them um either locate it or you know ill go find it in the back somewhere. Um, If I'm working textbooks I usually help um customers see if there's a book that they need or you know, which professors have requested different books and just help them get everything that they need.

DV: How many hours do you typically work each week?

AV: Um, I think if it's not during a specific season like a football season or something like that it's usually around 20 to 30. If it's one of our busy seasons it's usually close to 40.

DV: So what's it like to be a sales associate?

AV: Um, I actually enjoy it. Um, I like being able to help people and I know when I go out shopping if I can't find anything it's always helpful to have someone you know, help me find the things that I would like to purchase. And I also like the people that I work with; they're not too overbearing or they're not too slack about doing their jobs.

DV: What do you believe is the hardest thing about your job?

AV: Um, I think one of the hardest things is when customers get aggravated if we don't have anything or we're taking too long to find something or you know, someone makes like a small mistake as like if something is priced differently and they end up being—getting charged something different. It's hard when people argue with you about you know, they think that they know how that your store is supposed to be run. Um, and it's just hard keeping a level-head trying to help them find a solution without angering them.

DV: What do you believe is the most rewarding part of your job?

AV: Um, I think the most rewarding thing is when we're able to satisfy our customers. We're able to help them find exactly what they need and in you know, a timely matter. It's always nice when we're able to help them locate something and they're like really excited about it and then they leave really happy and you know, so that it'll help them to come back and do more business with us.

DV: What's the craziest thing that ever happened to you while you were at work?

AV: Um...

DV: Do interesting occurrences usually happen at your workplace or is everyday usually the same?

AV: Um, if it's not a busy day not too much happens. Usually during football season we get a lot of adamant Hokie fans and they're dressed up in crazy outfits and that's usually entertaining. And sometimes we have um, just people out of town like from the visiting schools and they'll be in their crazy costumes and sometimes they'll just be like running around our store being like whoa hokies! You know, and they're just--they'll just make it entertaining and it's usually kind of like fun to watch all of the different people who come into our store.

DV: Was there ever a time where you felt like a worker was mistreated in any way?

AV: Um, not that I know that I've been there. I think most of our employees have been treated fairly um...

DV: So are you generally like happy with um, the way things are run there?

AV: Mhmm. Yeah

DV: Was there ever a time when you wanted to quit your job?

AV: Um, I don't think so. Not really.

DV: Okay. What do you think is important for people to know about what you do?

AV: Um, I think it's important that they know [pause] let's see. I guess some people think that our job is just, you know, pretty laid back because we're just, supposed to know where everything is, but sometimes it gets complicated if things are out of place when we're trying to find it. I think it's important that they know that we're actually trying because I know some stores, some of the employees they're just like 'oh we don't have anything, sorry we're all out' you know? It's important that they know that we actually do care if we help them find something and we really want to help them find it and if we can't you know, we just--well we'll try to help them anyway that we can. Um, and so I think that's one of the main important things.

DV: What personality traits are required in order for you to be successful at your job?

AV: Generally, um you'll need to be, you know, pretty outgoing and be able to talk to people in a you know, orderly fashion. Not someone who I guess is you know, ill-tempered or short-tempered because sometimes they'll argue and you'll just have to you know, communicate with them the best way you can. So communication is a big trait um, being able to have an up-beat personality is always good because I don't [pause] a lot of our customers I don't think they'd want to you know, approach you if you're just kind of moping around the store so it's good to also be you know, pretty sociable and just be able to communicate to them and pay attention.

DV: Is it easy for you to take days off?

AV: Um, it's pretty fairly easy um, usually I can take off days that some of the students take off if my family wants to visit or wants me to visit um or if there's just you know an emergency that

comes up they're pretty good about it as long as I um tell them you know a few weeks ahead of time and not just "oh I need to get off tomorrow" as long as it's in a timely manner they're pretty lenient about when I can get days off.

DV: So your schedule is pretty flexible?

AV: Mhmm it's really flexible.

DV: Um, do you get like, special days off for vacations?

AV: Um sometimes I do, um like I said as long as it's you know, ahead of time. So if I were planning like, a bigger vacation even if it's not when the students are going somewhere, as long as I let them know and you know, try to help them figure out who else can cover any shifts that they need covered then they're pretty good about that.

DV: If you could change one of the following things about your work would you change: the wages, the benefits, the schedule, the location, the availability of health care, or the kinds of people you work with? Or is there something else that you would like to change about your job?

AV: Um, I would want to change some of the benefits, but even I think just because it's like right now I'm part time, that's probably why there's not too many benefits, but maybe if there was just you know something smaller not really like complete health care but just you know, something that'll you know, tide me over in case something happens I guess and um, maybe the wages. Um, I think for like when you get er, if you get a raise it's not that good of a raise even though you know, if I could be working a lot harder than other people, but we all still get the same. Maybe if they did it a little more by like how hard you work or how much you work, maybe something like that

DV: How do they usually do the bonuses or like how do they up the wages? Like is there a certain time frame that you work and then they do that?

AV: I'm not really sure I think it might be if you you know, worked at least a year or something like that. Um, because I think they do an annual review and then that's when they let you know if you got a raise or anything. So I think if [pause] I think it kind of goes like that, but I think if um someone else who's part time, but they don't work as many hours you know, maybe if they do it differently for different people.

DV: What advice would you give someone who is considering your line of work

AV: Um, let's see. I would just um, give them the advice that to you know, work. Just make sure that they're able to work with other people and able to deal with customers well. Um, I'd probably let them know that um you know, sometimes it'll be really slow, sometimes it'll be really busy and I just want them to like be able to balance everything out I guess like other things that they have going because sometimes like schedule could be a conflict if it's really really busy. Um, I'm not sure what else.

DV: What's the worst job that you've ever had?

AV: Like in general?

DV: Yea.

AV: Um, I don't know if there's like a worst job that I had. I think just one of my past jobs it got a little out of hand [laughter]

DV: Okay. Why did you decide to stay and work in Blacksburg after college?

AV: Um, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do after I graduated so I thought it would be a good idea to at least um you know, stay in Blacksburg, get a job, and um, try to figure out what I wanted to do and at least I'd be you know, I'd be able to save up money if I wanted to move somewhere else or if you know, wanted to go back home but not live with my parents or something. Um and I think there you know, there could be more opportunities here I just have to actually look for them. So as long as I keep an open mind about you know, what else I can do it's more of like just time to figure out what I want to do I guess

DV: What was it like being a theatre major at Virginia Tech? Were you always interested in theater?

AV: Um, I think I've always had an interest in theater. Um, it was more of like musicals and stuff, but I really liked going to like plays and shows and um, I really liked performing. As a theatre major it was really enjoyable. Um, all of our professors and you know all of the other students—they're really outgoing and able to talk to you and able to help you out with whatever you needed. Um, it was some classes were more laid back than you know, if someone who's doing like science or something. And some classes were about the same class load so it was a pretty good balance of you know, just acting stuff and then you know, the history of theater and other stuff. Um, so I think I really liked it.

DV: Do you still aspire to do something in a theatre-related field?

AV: Um kind of, kind of not. Um, after I graduated I actually ended up realizing that um, I do like performing but not really performing like if I were doing just a show that didn't have any like, singing or dancing. I think I really liked performing as a dancer more, but after I graduated I started um, just volunteering. And I found out that I actually like building the sets and helping them construct them as well, which during you know, while my time at Tech I was trying to focus more on performing so I didn't really realize it. So I've done some stuff with like, building and that kind of thing. I don't think I like designing, but I would enjoy you know, if I were able to find a theatre somewhere where I could just be like an assistant in building or just help out like that. I would be able to do that um, as well as I really want to try to do like, musicals since there's more singing and dancing in those. So that's kind of what I'm trying to figure out how to go about reaching one of those two.

DV: When you performed in college did you do like, only acting or did you just have to learn

everything?

AV: Um you can. I think you have to learn everything like there's a scene shop class, there's a costume class, there's a management class and there are like, the acting classes. Um, I think there's a basic layout where you have to at least do everything for at least one semester, but you can focus on something else. So if you wanted to be a designer you can focus just on designing, but you still had to take at least one acting class. Um actors, they had to at least do scene shop once and costume shop once and then they can focus more on their acting afterwards. So you, they give you like a basic of all around theatre and then you can pick your specific one. Um, let's see. And then I think like, our graduate school it has like three different things that you can focus on: acting, directing and then I think management.

DV: Did you ever think about going to graduate school for theater? Or...

AV: Um, I've kind of thought about it, but I think just because I've only looked at what we have and the three that we have aren't really what I want, I'd probably have to try to look at other schools which I just haven't been able to do um, since I'm trying to figure out stuff here. But I think maybe if I could find something you know, that is theater maybe like the you know, the set construction. But I know that for some of the set construction they want you to be able to design too which I would have a problem with. So that's what I'm trying to you know, figure out what's out there.

DV: Are there any other activities that you participate in such as volunteer work on the side?

AV: Um, I mean I still kind of do stuff with KDPhi. Um, I still try to participate in Big Event and um, Relay [for life]. Um, I kind of wish I could find more like, volunteer opportunities, but it's just easier to find them through the school. But if there's something that I can help out with the school, that's usually what I try to do.

DV: If you weren't working for this job, what would you ideally be doing?

AV: Um, ideally I would want to be like, dancing somewhere. Um, I've been trying uh, to see if I can find somewhere where I could like, maybe teach. Like not teach you know, upperclassmen, but just you know, teach like toddlers or something and then at least try to get into a dancing career someday like that.

DV: Where do you see yourself in five to ten years?

AV: Um, hopefully not here still [Laughter]. Um, I think I could see myself maybe do the like, teach dancing um, or possibly going to you know, more like a dance school or something. I've been trying to look at you know, different colleges to see how I would be able to if I could like, go back to undergrad as you know, a dance major or something. So I'd probably see myself you know, at least somewhere in the performing field in that way.

DV: In our class we've been talking a lot about the American Dream. What do you think about the American dream? Like how would you define it?

AV: Um, I think hm, I think I would define the American Dream as you know, striving for what you really want to do and going through all the struggles to get there and you know, finally reaching your--I guess your American Dream. And um, just being happy with what you're actually doing and being able to enjoy like, everyday working that same you know whatever field you're in.

DV: Do you think a person's race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. can affect whether or not he or she achieves the American Dream?

AV: Um, sometimes I think it could affect it, but sometimes I think it could also help especially since you know other—a lot of fields that look for more diversity. Um, I feel like now it could possibly help them more. Um, I don't think It'll--it would hinder too many people unless they're just really not working hard enough for it. I think it um, like whatever race, gender you know, a person is, I think as long as they're really trying hard and actually want to you know, do well I think they'll be able to achieve whatever they want.

DV: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

AV: Um...

DV: About your job in general or like anything?

AV: No, I think that's about it.

DV: Okay thank you!

AV: You're welcome! [Laughter]