

Susan Swanezy, F '81, is a partner at Hodes Weill & Associates. In this issue's Alumni Spotlight she discusses her unique career path and offers advice for McDonough students who are getting ready to launch their careers in the real estate industry.



Please tell us about your job as partner at Hodes Weill & Associates – what are some of the daily roles and responsibilities?

Our firm is involved primarily in capital raising as well as providing advisory services to real estate investment management companies — including, mergers and acquisitions and re-capitalizations. We are most well known for raising capital for real estate private equity funds, separate accounts or problematic ventures. My role includes coverage of institutional investors in the United States as well as leading efforts with marketing and distribution globally. This includes coordinating with teams in Europe, the Middle East and Asia who are building relationships with institutional investors around the world. I really enjoy being able to figure out what institutional investors want and need, and how we can help them achieve their goals by bringing well structured, high quality managers to market.

How did you get into the real estate industry?

Real estate is something I stumbled into. I came out of Georgetown with an international business and economics degree and the first assignment at my first employer, Chase Manhattan Bank, was working in a group that reviewed loan portfolios throughout the world. I did that for two years before looking to jump to the aerospace group, but the position never materialized. Luckily, there was an opening in real estate. So on a whim I gave it a shot and it has turned out to be an interesting and challenging career for over three decades. What is ironic is that people think of real estate as a very local field, but for the past decade capital flows have been much more global, which means I've been able to combine my expertise in real estate with my interest in international affairs.

Why did you choose Georgetown for your undergraduate degree?

I wanted an international business and politics element to my education and Georgetown was the only urban school I considered. I quickly realized that D.C. was the place to be. I had some great internship opportunities on K Street and Capital Hill. I was able to do things that would not be possible elsewhere, such as spend a summer abroad in Russia or having great opportunities at the Corp. When I had to really hunker down and study for finals, I would hole myself up in the Library of Congress. Georgetown is really part of the Washington political and international scene, with great speakers coming to campus all the time.

Do you have any advice for students about to launch their careers in the real estate industry?

In general, I think it's important to get a very solid underpinning of real estate, or whatever field you are interested in, and become a true expert in your craft. For women specifically, I would say find a mentor or sponsor, preferably a woman, to help you navigate the issues that inevitably arise. It's a hard

balancing act with career and family, so it's really helpful to have some guidance. When I was a young mom, I was cognizant of the time I had to spend away from the office to take my child to the doctor. A mentor of mine gave me this advice: don't say that you're not in the office because of your child. As long as you get your work done, it doesn't matter why you are away, otherwise you risk being marginalized.

What is one word you would use to describe Georgetown University?

Relevant. I think a Georgetown education is more relevant than ever. When you look at what's going on in the world today, the issues are complicated and multidimensional requiring an interdisciplinary approach. Georgetown offers an education that provides students with the skills and experience to succeed when confronted with complex issues.