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## Alumni Profile

Mardi Mileham  
*Linfield College*

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# A bridge between cultures

Kaelen Park '10 serves as a bridge between her company in Wilsonville and their counterparts in China.

Park, logistics and compliance manager for DWFritz Precision Automation in Wilsonville, has leveraged her degree in international business, fluency in Mandarin and intimate knowledge of the Chinese culture into a fast-paced career that she loves.

Park oversees the logistics for shipping, storing, coordinating and communicating with approximately 40 customer sites in China. She coordinates teams in Wilsonville and China to ensure that the company's machines get to their customers as quickly as possible amid changing schedules and demands. DWFritz designs and engineers automation systems for advanced manufacturing, serving consumer electronics, medical, life sciences, semiconductor, electric vehicle and industrial manufacturing companies around the globe.

Coordinating projects halfway around the world means Park's schedule is extremely complicated, and it's not unusual for her to be on call 24/7. She travels to China four to six times a year, spending anywhere from one to three weeks at a time. And when she's in the states, she's often on conference calls from 5:30 to 9 p.m. and sometimes throughout the night.

Regardless of her crazy schedule, she says she is blessed to have found a job that she loves and is a perfect fit for her.

"I may work weekends, Sunday nights for sure, because that's China's Monday," she said. "Their Saturday is our Friday, so I often take that off or get out as early as I can. It's all a trade-off and I'm lucky to have such a flexible work schedule."

Some of that schedule has also eased in the two years she's been at DWFritz. Initially, she was the only person doing the work. Now she heads the logistics teams in both the U.S. and China and coordinates with the team in China, which has helped with time and communication.

The lessons she learned through her language and cultural studies classes at Linfield and her study abroad experience have been invaluable. She excels at developing customer relationships.

"I'm recognized as being a kind of a bridge," she said. "I can talk about our systems, but people here and in China know if there is an issue, they can talk to me and I understand what their need is."

Park's interest in China stretches back to when she was 3 years old in her hometown of Walla Walla, Wash. Her family hosted a non-traditional Chinese student attending Whitman College. After returning to China, the young woman sent her son to attend Whitman and he also lived with the Park family. A Chinese professor at the college encouraged Park to take Chinese while she was in high school and to look for a college with a Chinese program. Linfield's study abroad emphasis and developing Chinese program was a fit.

Park majored in international business and petitioned to create a Chinese studies minor – the first to graduate with it. Her first experience in China was in a January Term advanced physics class taught by Professor Tianbao Xie. Park said it was life-changing. Determined to perfect her language skills and learn more about the culture, she studied at Hong Kong Baptist University as a senior and later returned to

complete her master's at Hult International Business School in Shanghai.

"Linfield's focus on study abroad is so important," Park said. "We need more cultural diversity and open mindedness in our world, especially in the U.S."

Linfield's small classes and interaction with professors was equally as important, along with the focus on the liberal arts.

"You have to take different classes in areas that you may not have any interest, but that is one of the greatest things you can do as an 18-year-old," she said. "Having to take an English class or a writing class will be useful your entire life, whether you are majoring in English, business or engineering."

– Mardi Mileham



*Kaelen Park '10 said her Linfield education was instrumental in her success as logistics and compliance manager for DWFritz Precision Automation. Professors Tianbao Xie, Mike Jones, Tyler McGee, Christopher Keaveney and Malek Daaboul were influential and supportive while at Linfield.*