Internships Provide Invaluable Experience For COD Students

By Brian Kleemann

Securing an internship can provide benefits beyond job experience, and Career Services at College of DuPage can help students find the right opportunity.

Sara Kirby, Assistant Manager of Career Services, said the upcoming fall term is a great time for students to begin searching for internships. In addition to gaining experience, students learn about a career and can determine if it’s the right path for them.

“A majority of our students may not be aware they can obtain internships while at College of DuPage or understand the importance of doing an internship at this point in their academic careers,” she said. “At four-year schools, internships that occur at the junior or senior level may be too late if a student determines afterward that this isn’t the right career. At COD, internships are a great way for career exploration and refinement of goals.”

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employer’s 2013 Internship and Coop Survey, intern hiring will increase by 2.7 percent nationally in 2013. Additionally, respondents said that more than one-third of 2012-2013 new college hires are expected to come from internship and cooperative education programs. In NACE’s 2013 Student Survey, more than 63 percent of paid interns received at least one job offer.

Career Services at College of DuPage offers free Internship Search and Success seminars every term. Students are encouraged to enroll online; if they cannot attend a seminar, they can meet one-on-one with a career specialist.

Kirby said internships can often lead to additional internship opportunities. College of DuPage student Samantha Ragusin of Naperville (pictured above), a Graphic Design student pursuing her associate’s degree, completed her second internship this summer after participating in the College’s popular Disney College program.

“Ever since I was little, I have always been a huge Disney fan. I was the kid who would pick up her cat while standing on the couch and hoist it in the air like Simba from ‘The Lion King,’” she said. “So when I found out that College of DuPage offered students an opportunity to work at Walt Disney World through the Disney College Program, I immediately jumped at the chance. Not only did I
receive vast new knowledge on guest service, but I was able to network and learn the Disney polices.”

After returning from the Disney program in May, Ragusin was offered an internship through CMO Graphics in Chicago. She has utilized her graphic design skills and worked on advertising products for Kraft Foods and Mondelēz International.

“If I hadn’t attended COD, I don’t think I would have had these incredible opportunities,” she said. “Disney taught me how to be part of the magic and how to create magical moments for others. CMO Graphics taught me about design and how to make things look visually appealing.”

Kirby said Career Services also works with students who are pursuing an internship for academic credit, which is required by some programs. An internship at COD also makes transfer students competitive for additional internships as they pursue bachelor’s degrees.

Regardless of the reason, Kirby said the benefits of internships extend far beyond job opportunities. “If an employer trains an intern who performs well and a position is open, the student can be hired,” she said. “But students also can use an internship to network. They build relationships by working within this career field, and they can meet a person who may know someone else who has a job opening. Finally, students may realize that a certain career isn’t for them after an internship. Being a community college, we know it’s not too late to make a switch and can help these students refine their career goals.”

For more information about internships, or for employers looking to partner with the college to host interns, visit www.cod.edu/careerservices or call (630) 942-2230.

_Pictured: College of DuPage Student Samantha Ragusin_