

Succeed and Soar in Your Time at the UNH-IOL

By Griffin Leclerc - Friday, September 4 2015

Greetings fellow intern and congratulations on your recent employment here at the UNH-IOL. The experiences you will have at this job will serve you throughout your entire career. Not just the skills that you will receive in your consortium, but the social and work skills alone will last you a lifetime. No matter what major you decide to pursue in your college career, you will always benefit from the skills you learned here during your internship. Now earning these skills requires a mixture of determination, work ethic, and enjoyment of what you do day-to-day. If you are willing to get work accomplished and learn in the process, then you will undoubtedly succeed and soar in your time at the UNH-IOL and beyond.

I had absolutely no idea that I liked technology until my freshman year of high school. In seventh and eighth grade everyone seemed to know exactly what they wanted to do, while I had no idea. If someone had a malfunctioning device or other problem, however, I was usually able to fix it. That was the extent of my knowledge. It seemed I had always been successful when it came to technology, but I had never thought about making a career of it. On around the third day of high school, iPads were distributed to the students because our school was participating in a technology integration program. I completed my setup in about 30 seconds, then I was requested to assist the rest of the students. After that, the Technology Coordinator at my school asked me to come to his office to assist him with a problem installing software. I participated in many more technological experiences, such as assisting in the summer-long installation of fiber optics in my school building. I went from having little-to-no experience in practical technology, to wanting to major in it and spend the rest of my life doing it. That was a lesson for me to take every opportunity that was presented, because you never know where it might lead.

Your internship is not like any other internship. On day One you are placed into a professional environment with experts on everything there ever is to know about the elements of consortium. And you don't do traditional intern tasks (i.e., refilling coffee pots or carrying boxes to locations). In fact it is quite the opposite; you are given real tasks that contribute to your consortium. The first task I was assigned in AVnu was bug testing the newest release of the testing client being used on devices we received from vendors. It was simple enough work for us to understand, but difficult enough to keep our attention throughout the task and require thought to complete. This trend continued throughout my time here, meaning that the work was easy enough for my fellow interns and I to understand, but challenging enough to require consideration and to deliberate and test solutions. There were exceptions to feeling confident, however, but the people around you will be so willing to assist you in any way that you need. If you have any spare time, I would suggest that you talk to your fellow consortia members, or anyone else in the UNH-IOL, because they most likely know far more than you do. Whatever they have to say is valuable to you because you will learn more from it and leave the internship with a greatly expanded knowledge base.

Another terrific aspect of the internship is the Site Visits. At least once a week you will have the opportunity to take a tour of a location that is highly technological in nature. During these tours you

will hear experiences and learn from engineers at the host companies, see top-secret areas of the company, and be asked to apply to those companies as a college intern later in your career. The engineers are the best of the best in their fields. You could spend hours on end talking to them about their jobs and the experiences in their lives. The classified equipment is another highlight of the Site Visits, and the volume of equipment these companies have is just astounding. And finally, the future opportunities that they offer you are terrific. Many will offer you the opportunity of a college internship, and they will encourage you to apply for those internships when you are eligible. The most valuable piece of advice that I can give you is to create a LinkedIn account if you do not already have one, and add the people who gave you the tour of their facility and anyone else that stood out to you. Doing this will keep you in touch with them after your visit and they will see that you have previously met them if you apply there in the future.

One of the best parts of this internship is the environment that you get to work in. I have previously mentioned the willingness to help that everyone in the UNH-IOL possesses. This is amazing and unlike any place you will probably ever work. For any and all problems you will encounter, you can ask someone and, if they cannot tell you an answer immediately, they will at least point you in the right direction. If no one in your consortium knows because it has to do with something based in another consortium, then go and ask that other consortium! They are more than willing to help you answer a question about their processes. The best part about your fellow workers is that they aren't just friendly when it comes to questions, they're friendly all of the time. A perfect example is when an employee whom I've never met walked by our consortium and he was carrying a scale. Someone in my consortium got his attention and said, "I can see you've gained some weight." He responded by holding the scale to one side, gesturing to it as if he was displaying it, and said "Quite the contrary, I'm a scale model." After that, about 5 minutes of scale puns followed. It is just a terrific example of how you can make new friends here instantly.

After my experience here I can truthfully say that I have expanded my knowledge base, exponentially. Not only have I learned a great deal more than I thought I already knew, but many beliefs I came here with were torn up and replaced with something even better. A good example is that I thought programming was boring and not enjoyable, but now I believe it to be challenging, yet fun, and might change college majors because of it. This has been a terrific experience for me all around, including the physical work that I do from day to day, the learning of all the systems and processes in the UNH-IOL, the workplace experience, and my welcoming and open co-workers. It has not been easy, but I will always value my experience at the UNH-IOL and I hope you do as well.