There are very few university organizations where general body meetings consist of various props being thrown at other members, swung at high speeds, and lit on fire. Serving as the Vice President of the University of Florida Juggling Club has been one of my major commitments throughout my time as an undergraduate outside of academia. Besides having the opportunity to learn new patterns and skills from other members, build the club’s reputation in the international juggling community, and participate in regional competitions, I have gained a much deeper understanding of effective leadership. My roles included recruitment, organizing club meetings, and choreographing and securing performances. The process of creating and performing a group routine invariably proved to be a highly stressful task but rewarding task.

First was expressing attentiveness to the general body. Every member who had a unique skill or interest in performing had a right to be included. Although the oldest members generally have the most consistent stage skills, the new members have a much greater need for stage time and exposure. Next was being able to inspire each of these members to the best of his or her ability, as passion is one emotion that comes across unobscured. There was a year when one member was deathly afraid of performing and not yet a skilled juggler, but her enthusiasm about her role as the “clumsy robot” instantly made her the audience’s favorite years before she became a core talent. Finally, leading a team of performers requires a significant amount of flexibility as well as pacifism. Every member of the team relies heavily on the other members to have a successful performance, especially since a juggler who makes a bad pass ends up making the receiver look bad. However, there are few greater feelings than the moment the last catch in a routine is made and the whole team can stand together on their hard work and bow.

every member having a different repertoire of skills and different stage personality, Every member of the team relies on every other member to make good passes and play their part. The members on the team always had varying skill levels and interests, so it was an added challenge to understand how to inspire each individual to his or her best, rather than hold back their talents. that has been used in many performances, ranging from shows for children with disabilities at the local hospital to retirement homes where our audience was more impressed with how much we resembled their grandchildren. Nevertheless, because every member of the team relies so heavily on every other member in our tightly-choreographed pieces, it was often frustrating and difficult to improve. For example, no matter how much time and practice was spent rehearsing and designing the perfect Halloween show for children with disabilities, when the children we were committed to entertaining pick up the juggling props and have the time of their lives swinging them around, a new plan must be developed on the spot.

Interns at SpaceX are given tremendous responsibility and put under extreme pressure, as their equipment is interfaced with flight critical electronics and sent to space. The relatively flat hierarchy allowed me to exercise my leadership skills every day, as the integration projects I worked on required a wide variety of engineers and scientists, from electromagnetic compatibility technicians confirming my equipment won’t break the International Space Station to mechanical engineers designing and producing enclosures to house the circuit boards. Unfortunately, these other engineers are always occupied with other projects and do not have any interest in seeking new work. In order to get the assistance I needed, I was forced to assemble my own team of engineers, which used a combination of charm, persuasion, and compromise. Ultimately, I learned many lessons about effective communication, leadership, and even taking falls and flack in order to bring the best out of those who are working for me. I also practiced negotiation, process planning, and delivering results at all costs on a daily basis.

As the team leader of an interdisciplinary team of engineers while participating in the University of Florida Integrated Product and Process Design (IPPD) program, I was faced with seemingly intractable problems, such as bringing out the best of each team member to produce a preliminary design review in

Outside of academics, serving as the Vice President of the University of Florida’s Juggling Club has been a large part of my life. While being part of the club gave me the chance to learn new and creative patterns from other members,