

TechNews

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OPINION	2
CAMPUS	3-4
A&E	5
SLIPSTICK	6
SPORTS	7

Sophomore Leadership Retreat empowers, motivates students

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Last year, when I was a freshman student, I would always hear about how the Sophomore Leadership Retreat is so awesome. "You cannot miss it!" people would say to me. However, it always seemed like these people would stop the conversation at that, not telling me why I should not miss the event. Only now that I am a sophomore and have attended the retreat this past weekend have I realized why this event is so important for Illinois Tech students.

The Sophomore Leadership Retreat is sponsored by the Leadership Academy here at IIT, and there were two weekend sessions just before classes started. The sophomores and Leadership Academy scholars stayed at Pretty Lake Camp in Michigan for only about 48 hours, but many life-changing activities occurred within that limited amount of time, and it was completely free to attend! The setting at Pretty Lake, surrounded by tall trees breaking into sand and meeting the cool, refreshing water, was very serene and calming. This made it the perfect place to hold the leadership retreat.

When we first got off the bus in Pret-

ty Lake, I had no idea what to expect, I was just going with the flow. However, I was nervous about one thing: the Comfort Circle. What was this weird-sounding thing? It sounded so strange as I kept reading it off our first night's schedule. The same night, I learned that I never should have felt nervous; I should have kept an open mind, because the activity ended up being not nearly as uncomfortable as it sounded.

Each hour of those 48 was spent to its full potential. Our schedules were packed with physical activities done as a team: kayaking, boat building, high ropes, climbing walls, and more.

Plus, we were able to bond during meals, around the campfire, and some of us even played amateur soccer games in our spare time. It was not purely a situation where students had to always stay in their prescribed teams--we also had free time to use as we pleased and got to spend it with whomever we wanted.

By putting myself out there and trusting my team members as well as them depending on me, I learned so much about how to be a better leader. The two Leadership Academy scholars who led my team were

amazing role models; I never before realized the incredible power of encouraging words and simple phrases like "Trust me," "Look at me," and "Don't worry, I've got you." To this moment, I still cannot believe how much the fact that I could trust my teammates truly enabled me to keep going and overcome the challenges we faced.

So, just why is the Sophomore Leadership Retreat so awesome? If I had to condense the answer into one phrase, it would have to be because while you are there having fun and meeting new people, you are also gathering leadership skills and pushing yourself beyond what you had previously thought were your limits.

This retreat has also helped me reflect on myself a lot, which, before the retreat, I did not often do, and realize what really makes a great leader: planning, communication, trust, and a willingness to work outside your comfort circle, just to name a few. I cannot wait to implement what I've learned during the Sophomore Leadership Retreat into the real world.

Thank you, Leadership Academy, for this awesome experience!

MSI-IIT internship program provides growth, opportunity to educate others

Kori Bowns
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The Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) is the largest science museum in the western hemisphere, holding over 35 thousand artifacts and nearly 14 acres of interactive exhibits and experiences. The museum's home is the former Palace of Fine Arts building from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, and it opened in 1933 under philanthropist Julius Rosenwald's vision to create a hands-on industry museum in the United States. Each year, the museum works toward achieving its mission to "inspire the inventive genius in everyone" with the help of several Illinois Tech students.

This summer, eight Illinois Tech students joined the museum as Guest Programs Interns at the Museum of Science and Industry for a 12-week, full-time paid internship. Throughout the duration of the internship, the eight students learned and presented a variety of live science demonstrations to museum guests on a daily basis. In total, the students learned six interactive demonstrations over the summer that reached over 30 thousand museum guests.

Interns worked alongside a team of eight other year-round facilitators at the museum, including two lead interns, students who have already worked as summer interns with the museum and take on a leadership role as they help the new interns learn demonstrations and improve communication skills. The year-round facilitators assisted the IIT interns by observing their demonstrations and offering constructive criticism and feedback in regard to content, style, and delivery.

In order to become eligible for the internship, students must first apply to volunteer at the museum over the course of the Fall or Spring semester during the academic year. During the semester, these students learn to present three interactive and hands-on demonstrations to museum guests. Volunteers work alongside lead interns to receive coaching and support as they learn more about presenting to different audiences and speaking in public. Demonstrations done by volunteers cover topics including sound, electricity, and Newton's Laws.

Twelve volunteers are accepted to the program each semester. Upon completion of 20 total volunteer hours in a semester, the volunteers qualify to apply for one of the eight paid summer internship positions, where they learn larger programs and work full-time.

Demonstrations facilitated by summer interns include topics from across all realms of science, from astronomy to biology. One show, "Happy Brirthday," is an interactive birthday party for a famous scientist or inventor that features several experiments with liquid nitrogen and culminates in making liquid nitrogen ice cream for the audience. Another program, "Bangs, Flashes, and Fire," MSI's most highly-attended show,

(Continued on Page 4)

