

# Museum of Science & Industry offers volunteer, internship positions for students

**Kori Bowns**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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.

Each semester undergraduate students from IIT have a unique service learning opportunity at the Museum of Science and Industry through the MSI Internship Program. Students apply to spend a few days during the semester volunteering at the museum, leading science demonstrations to the museum's general audience. Volunteers who complete a required minimum number of volunteer hours at the museum also qualify to apply for a paid internship at MSI over the summer. Last year's eight internship students learned a variety of demonstrations and presented them to over 30 thousand museum guests.

In order to become eligible for the internship, students must first attend an information session held early in the semester

and 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, who were summer interns in previous years, 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 summer internship positions, where they learn larger programs and work full-time.

The MSI-IIT internship partnership is now entering its 8th year. This partnership began with a common trustee between IIT and MSI, and the program aims to foster communication skills in students while making science education accessible to the community through the delivery of several fun and interactive live science demonstrations at MSI.

"I have been looking at the program since my freshman year," says Cassie Godette, 5th year physics major and 2014 MSI summer intern. "It's a little intimidating to do demonstrations in front of a ton of people, but it's really great once you try."

Christina Castillo, 4th year applied

math major and 2014 intern, adds her thoughts about the feedback that volunteers and interns receive at the museum to help improve their programs. "In our shows, we learn how to give positive reinforcement and how to stay positive with our guests. Those traits translate into the feedback we get from other facilitators at the museum. Our feedback is never negative; it's always positive and constructive. We always learn about what we do well and get suggestions on what to work on. There's always something that you do well and there's never a truly bad show. The museum is an awesome place to learn how to take feedback and practice presentation skills that you're going to need for the rest of your professional career."

Students who complete the internship and volunteership also report increased confidence, more comfort with public speaking, and positive experiences in working in a team.

Lynne Meyer, Director of the Office of Spiritual Life, Diversity, and Service at IIT, who acts as the liaison between the museum and the university, also offers her wisdom. She says that the MSI volunteership and internship can be a positive and important experience for anyone, regardless of their major. "Whatever field you go into, you're going to have to communicate with people who are not in your area. Whether it's your boss, a customer, or a colleague in another department, being able to confidently and concisely explain difficult

concepts to somebody who doesn't share your background is a real valuable skill."

The MSI Internship Program has become a highly competitive opportunity for IIT students over recent years. Meyer says there are usually over three times as many students applying than there are spots open for the volunteership portion of the program, so students should also remember not to get discouraged if they don't get selected on their first try. With so many passionate and qualified applicants, it is very difficult to narrow them down to the 12 who are chosen to volunteer each semester. Although this program is a very unique partnership between MSI and IIT for undergraduate students, one should also know there are many other ways to volunteer within the museum if they'd like to have that experience. Students are also heavily encouraged to try again and apply in upcoming semesters should they not make it on their first try; several successful volunteers and interns in the program have applied more than once before being accepted to the volunteership.

In order to apply for the MSI-IIT volunteership and internship program, interested students must attend information sessions being held this week on Tuesday, February 3 and Wednesday, February 4. All of the information sessions will be held in the Hermann Hall Crown Room at 12:50 p.m.. Contact Lynne Meyer at [lmeyer2@iit.edu](mailto:lmeyer2@iit.edu) with any additional questions.

