

MSI-IIT internship program

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speaking and presentation skills are more natural and confident, and my ability to adapt my presentation depending on the needs of a particular audience has improved, and I also now more understand the key components of working in a successful and motivated team. It was a blast to interact with audiences ranging in age from three years old to 80 years old and seeing the same look of wonder, awe, and fascination on their faces.”

“It was a combination of science, teaching, and theater that I wouldn’t be able to find anywhere else,” said Amy Zasadzinski, 2013 intern and second year psychology/biology double major at IIT. “This internship gave me valuable practice in improving my people skills, presentation skills, stage presence, and crowd control. My favorite part of the internship . . . [was] the experience of being able to present to hundreds of people every day and having some of those people come up to me and tell me things they learned from the presentation and how they never knew science could be so cool!”

Being hired for the MSI Guest Programs internship is the final phase of a unique partnership that MSI exclusively holds with Illinois Institute of Technology. The MSI-IIT internship partnership is now entering its 7th 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.

Students apply to spend a few days volunteering at the museum during either the fall or spring semester of the academic year. During this time, the accepted volunteers facilitate smaller programs to the general museum audience. They are coached by the lead interns who have already completed the volunteer-ship and internship portions of the program. The volunteers learn two or three interactive, hands-on, and experiment-based science demonstrations, with topics including Newton’s laws, sound, and electricity and magnetism.

Upon completion of 20 total volunteer hours in a semester, the volunteers qualify to apply for the paid summer internship, where they learn the larger programs and work full-time. When applying for the volunteership, for-

mer interns offer a lot of guidance. “My advice is to not be afraid to give it a shot,” says Trevor. “This internship places you in situations that may make you feel nervous and uncomfortable, but it’s these situations that test your limits and help you understand your strengths and possible areas of improvement.” Amy adds that there are tons of reasons why the internship could be a great fit for anyone. “If you find that you have great connections with people . . . or just love getting people as excited as you are about science, do not be afraid and apply for the internship!”

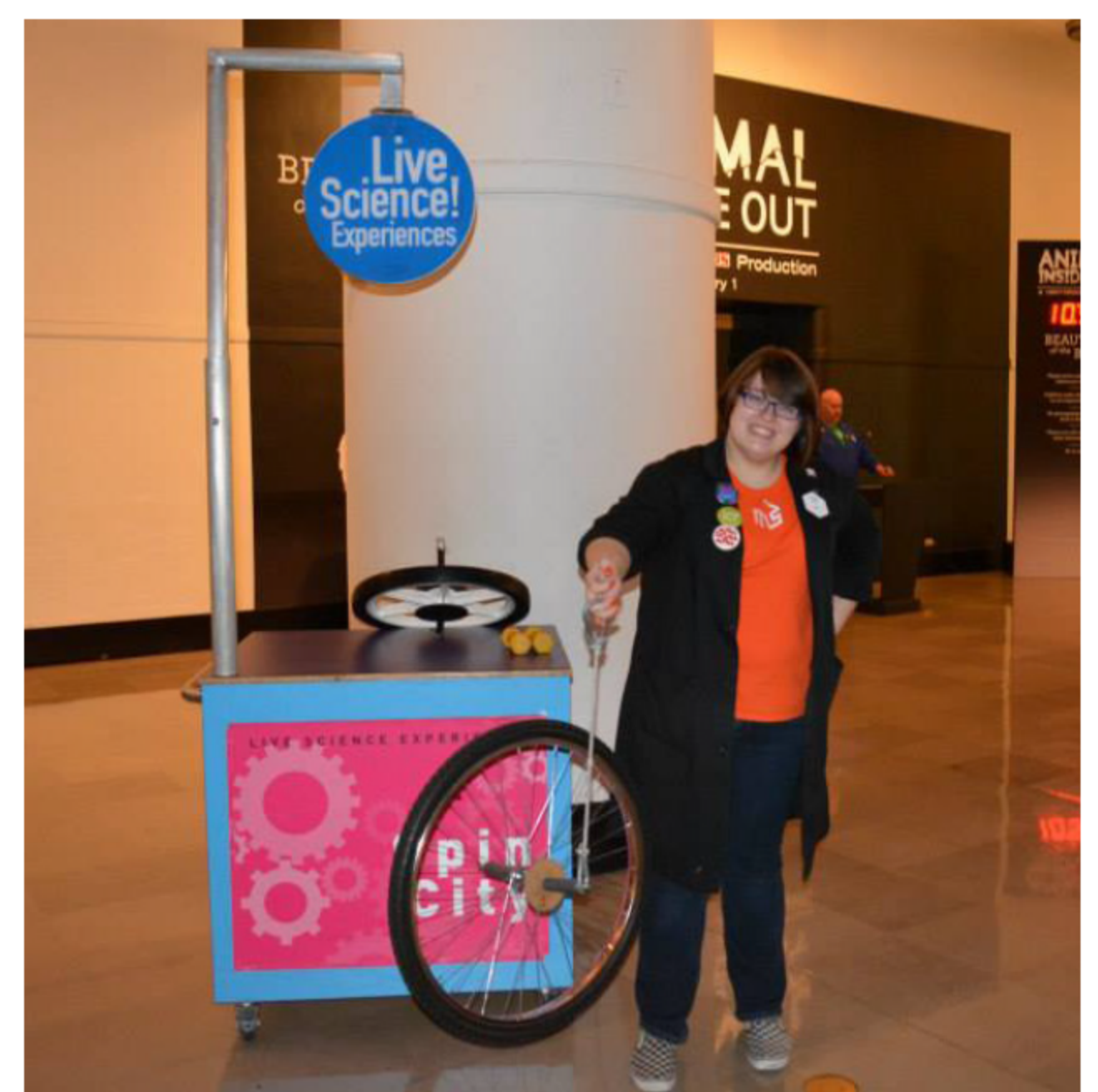
Lynne Meyer, Director of the Office of Spiritual Life and Service Learning here at IIT, who acts as the liaison between the museum and the university, also offers her wisdom. She says that the MSI volunteership and internship can be a positive and important experience for anyone, regardless of their 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. “These seem like really basic points, but know what you’re applying for,” Meyer said, about those filling out an application. “Don’t just come to an info session, sign in, and not pay attention. Ask questions. Also, know yourself, and know what the opportunity really is. When filling out the application, answer the questions. Take the application seriously enough to think about it, represent yourself, and sell yourself,” Meyer added. “Take your time and think about what you’re saying. At the same time, have fun with it. If you’ve got a passion, let us see the passion.” 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 usually 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, 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.

In order to apply for the volunteership, interested students must attend one of three information sessions taking place next week. The info sessions will be held in the Hermann Hall Crown Room from 12:30 P.M. (12:30-24h) to 1:45 P.M. (13:45-24h) on September 17, 18, and 19. For more information, contact Lynne Meyer at lmeyer2@iit.edu.



Photos courtesy of IIT College of Science

Confusion, controversy over Westboro Baptist Church rumors

Ryan Kamphuis
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

With over 2000 members, IIT’s Admitted Undergraduate Facebook Page has been a hive of news, discussion, and debate for IIT students since its inception. It was on this page that students began an intense debate this past week, when a student posted that they had been informed that a member of the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) had been invited to campus to give a lecture this semester.

The Westboro Baptist Church has existed in Topeka, Kansas since 1955. The church began to gain notoriety in the early 1990s, however, when they began to picket gay bars and other “dens of anonymous homosexual activity.” The church became a household name during the early years of the United States’ war in Iraq when they began picketing the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq, claiming that these deaths were God’s punishment for the U.S. government, “abandoning all moral imperatives.” These funeral pickets spawned large counter-protests and a lawsuit seeking to stop the church from picketing funerals, arguing that the church was a hate group. This lawsuit was eventually heard by the Supreme Court in 2011, where

the Court voted 8 to 1 that the church’s protests were a form of protected speech under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Shortly after the student posted what they had heard about the WBC lecture, debate exploded on the Facebook page over whether or not the lecture was a good idea. Some students argued that by giving a member of the Westboro Baptist Church a podium to speak, it would appear to the public that the university implicitly supported the church, which could negatively affect the reputation of the university and its students. Others argued that the lecture could be a good way to discover the mindset of the WBC and its members, and that they have the right to express and speak their opinions. Throughout this debate, university faculty and staff were silent, leading to the debate becoming increasingly based on hearsay and conjecture. Some students eventually took it upon themselves to set up meetings with university administration to determine whether or not these rumors were true; some with the intent to try to convince the school to not hold the lecture.

It was amidst this confusion and debate that TechNews reached out to IIT’s Lewis College of Human Sciences and the Office of Marketing and Communication to determine the true story of the WBC lecture. It was through this that TechNews had the

opportunity to speak to Jeanne Hartig, the Vice President of the Office of Marketing and Communication, is currently [at the time of publication] in Seoul, South Korea for IIT’s Annual International Alumni Association meeting.

By interviewing Dr. Hartig, TechNews learned that Margie Phelps, WBC leader Fred Phelps’ daughter, the lawyer who represented the church in front of the Supreme Court, had been invited and confirmed to take part in a debate being held by the Lewis College of Human Sciences as part of the Benjamin Franklin Project. Phelps would have been participating in a debate that was going to focus on the issue of freedom of speech, and Dr. Laura Beth Nielson was also confirmed to be taking part in the debate. Nielson is a fellow at the American Bar Foundation, the director of the Legal Studies program at Northwestern University, and an expert on hate speech. The debate was going to be moderated by Professor Steve Heyman, a professor at the IIT Chicago Kent College of Law, and an expert on freedom of speech issues.

TechNews has also learned that it is true that the debate had been canceled. “Hosting any event on campus requires that we be certain we have what we need to make that event successful. That may range from the right room being available at the right time to

having the necessary staff available to manage the operations,” said Hartig. “Given that we have a number of events taking place in the fall, we decided we didn’t have the right mix for this program and so we called the speakers to tell them we decided it was better to cancel the event.”

The point of the Benjamin Franklin Project series, and the debate in question, is to offer a forum for lively debate on the issues related to our nation’s founding principles. While the planned debate on the freedom of speech has been canceled, Hartig expressed her appreciation of the fact that the Facebook posts regarding the WBC rumors became a discussion of freedom of speech in itself. “I was most encouraged by reading the posts of students who understood the intended purpose of the event—which was to explore the concept of free speech and the extent to which we as a nation need to protect that right...that freedom simply doesn’t exist in many parts of the world,” said Hartig. “I thought [the Facebook discussion] was a great exchange of opinion.” Acknowledging the detractors of the rumored event, Hartig talked about how the discussion is the very essence of freedom of speech, “if we disagree, then it is our responsibility to ask questions, protest if necessary, and boycott as appropriate,” explained Hartig.