Chelsea Maclan

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For this fall semester, I was fortunate enough to be able to accept an internship opportunity with the Walt Disney company. However with that amazing news, I still decided that it’d be in my best interest to maintain my full-time student status. Among all the classes I partook in, this Internship class in the Communications department was one of them. By participating in this class during my program, I’ve been able to critically think about this internship and what it really does for me.

By taking part in the Disney College Internship Program, I have gained various things, and among these various things include valuable skills, experience, life-long friendships, and unforgettable memories. Before I started my program, I recall thinking about how excited and eager I was to begin learning all the new things that I could. I went in to the program with expectations that weren’t necessarily encountered in the way that I could’ve hope that they were going to be met, but nonetheless, I am very happy here.

The main thing that I will say that I wish I was more prepared for with this internship, was having more money saved up. When I accepted my program offer, my dad asked me if I was sure that I was going to be able to make enough money working here to pay all my bills on time. I reassured him that I would be okay, and that I’m certain Disney will pay me good enough. Turns out that I was wrong… if there are some things I’ve learned that people who did the program prior to me won’t tell you, I will tell you- living in Disney housing is robbery. I live in a 3 bedroom apartment, with a total of 6 girls (myself included), and every week approximately $107 is deducted from our paycheck. By doing the math, it appears that we are being charged way more than non-college program participants’ monthly rent on a place that is far better than what we are provided with. Not only this, but if you have other payments, like a car payment, car insurance, phone bill, and etc. to pay off monthly as well, I hope that you are making enough to be able to pay every single one of those on time.

Through my experience, I had to use my credit card to pay for everything else (i.e. groceries, eating out, gas, Disney gifts, etc.) while I attempted at saving enough in my checking account to be able to pay off the important stuff. It proved to be quite tedious considering the fact that my paychecks were horrible. The money that you make really depends on your role and location, and how much Disney housing deducts from your paycheck. Although I did get lucky with my location, I still cannot fathom the fact that I am unable to pick up a role elsewhere due to our different training from other quick service food and beverage employees. I was guaranteed at least 30 hours at my location, just as every CP, but with how my location is set up, there isn’t a lot of hours to go around. It’s quite disappointing. Another thing I wish I knew coming here was that I wouldn’t be working for two whole weeks, and thanks to that I generally feel that this is where my luck with money messed up since I feel like I saved a really good amount of money to make it out here. My advice to future college program participants is mainly to make sure that they have worked enough to save money for this program, and for the two week period where you will not be working. I could go further on, but I’m going to move on to my next topic of something I wish I knew before coming here.

Another thing that I wish I knew before coming here would be to not have put any sort of interest at all in food and beverage positions. Now, I say this not only because everyone dislikes food and beverage positions… but because all of my recent previous jobs have all been in that same field. When I applied for this program, I wanted to do something different… something that I’ve never done, like guest relations or attractions. I felt like being in a completely unfamiliar location, in which I would learn something new to utilize in my future endeavors. I didn’t know that by putting the tiniest bit of interest in a food and beverage position, that that would be where I’d end up. Moral of this here is if you don’t want to work in there at all, then do not put it down at all. It won’t make you look like an unworthy candidate, I promise.

Last but not least, my last Disney College Program “Something I wish I knew” tip would be that balancing working and full-time student status is very difficult here. At times I found myself wishing that I didn’t do this to myself. Some weeks I will work 30 hours, and some over 40… it varies, and majority of the time when I have something due, I’m usually very tired from working so much that I either forget the assignment, have no motivation to do it, or stay up late to a point where I’m always staying up late forcing unhealthy habits on me.

However with all of these things I wish I knew before participating in the DCP, I still enjoyed pretty much every moment that I’ve had here and I am very thankful for the opportunity because it has helped me grow in a number of ways, and more specifically as a person. As a person this internship has helped me grow by teaching me how to be more independent: I’ve never lived away from home, and being miles away with not knowing anyone really tested that, by teaching me to be more diligent: with being a student online for the first time, I really had to make sure that I was on my A game without forgetting assignments and/or to study for exams because there was no one there to remind me, by teaching me that I possess leadership qualities: being here and experiencing all that I have, goes to show me that I am ready for the next step in my career, and lastly by inspiring me: almost every day that I am here I am inspired… and if I find myself forgetting, I can always go to the parks, see a Disney movie, or listen to a Disney soundtrack and remember. It’s really interesting to think about how the Walt Disney Company began. It all started with one man and a dream… and that’s inspiring enough.

Thanks to completing the ePortfolio assignment from this class my professional presence has improved. For one, I now have a published website online for potential future employers, coworkers, and colleagues to examine. This has helped me and my professional presence online because before this class, I did not want to put myself quite out there just yet. All I needed was a little push.