

UWO students and alumni pursue Disney dream careers

by Alyssa Kadansky - Thursday, October 10, 2013

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For most, college is the place where life really begins—where you meet lifelong friends, learn valuable life lessons and begin to see your dreams become reality. At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, some students' dreams have led them to the very place “where dreams come true”—Disney.

Disney has been touching the hearts of people, young and old, for generations. Today, UWO and Disney seem to go hand-in-hand. With the popularity of the Disney College Program, a national program that helps college students land internships at the company, as well as the wide array of job opportunities available, alumni and current students alike are finding their dream careers through Disney.

Some have envisioned a job with Disney since their first viewing of *The Lion King* or *Sleeping Beauty* as a child. Sophomore Tiffany Stocks, of Saukville, and her family made Disney World a regular vacation spot for many years before she discovered the opportunities it held when she noticed cast members wears name tags that display their college.

“My family decided to ask one of the cast members why her nametag had a school on it, and she told us all about the Disney College Program and that her position was an internship,” Stocks said. “When I got into college, I looked up the internship and knew this would be perfect for me and possibly my only chance to make my dream of someday working for the Disney company come true.”

During Stocks' semester-long internship, she worked in various positions, selling merchandise and creating an enjoyable atmosphere while promoting Disney products, all while staying caught up with her classes at UWO.

“UWO offered classes that I could take while I was there that would give me credits toward graduation,” Stocks said. “The six credits I received from the two online classes that I took allowed me to come back to school and be at the same level as most of the people I started my college career with. I spent a whole semester in Disney, but my position in school continued to progress.”

Stocks enjoyed her time with Disney so much that she did not want to limit herself to only one semester there. She is now a seasonal employee and will spend her summer and winter breaks working at Disney World.

Stocks is following in the footsteps of several UWO alumni who are now Disney employees.

Rachel Adams '02, of Winter Garden, Fla. found her passion at the place “where dreams come true” through her involvement with the Disney College Program. It was throughout her time at UWO that she discovered her love for the entertainment industry.

“My dream job my senior year of college was to be 'N SYNC's manager,” Adams said. “I was a huge fan

of the group, and I thought it would be a great way to see the world and hang out with them.”

Adams’ involvement in the theatre department and her participation in Reeve Union Board activities led her to her current career where she has the opportunity to work with many entertainers.

Adams works as the guest service manager with Walt Disney World Park Event Operations Media and Special Programs.

“My team assists with all logistical planning for various types of media visiting the Walt Disney World Resort,” Adams said. “We work with all the lines of business within the theme parks and water parks to plan and execute television production, online content, photography, remote radio broadcasts and press events.”

UWO and the Disney College Program helped make Adams’ dream come true, but while Adams and Stocks both discovered their passion for Disney during their time at UWO, not all UWO alumni originally dreamed of working with the famous mouse himself.

Ann Spaulding ’03, of Burbank, Calif. earned her degree in elementary education. Spaulding originally planned to have her own classroom, but after moving to Los Angeles and running into a scarce teaching job market, she decided to explore other career opportunities.

Spaulding began working in the entertainment business as an assistant at a theatrical trailer company that develops movie trailers and TV spots. This experience in the world of entertainment led her to interview for a job with the Walt Disney Company, where she is now the director of creative print services for Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Spaulding is responsible for managing and overseeing all of the print production for Disney’s theatrical live-action films, including *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Iron Man 3*, *Thor*, *The Avengers* and many more.

“My job is to make sure the marketing images that the studio and filmmakers love get out in the world in the form of printing and producing movie posters, banners for movie theaters and outdoor marketing for all types of media from billboards to bus wraps to subway station take-overs,” Spaulding said.

Although working in the film industry was not her original dream, Spaulding said that she is proud to work for an “amazing company and a talented team of filmmakers.” She attributes her professional success to her time at UWO and the values it instilled in her.

“UWO did help me become a better person, a hard worker and someone with a great work ethic who gets the job done right and on time,” Spaulding said.

While Spaulding’s career with Disney was unexpected, alumna Lori (Piekarski) Corral ’95, of Altadena, Calif., never imagined she would have the opportunity to work for a company such as Disney.

“As a student, there are so many questions and insecurities,” Corral said. “I often felt invisible, small, like I couldn’t possibly make a difference. My professors believed in me when I couldn’t see my own value.”

A dedicated fine arts student, Corral spent many late nights in the sculpture studio working on pieces.

"I joked once to my sculpting professor, T.C. Farley, that I was going to work for Disney," Corral said. "I said that out loud and the universe answered."

Corral's late nights paid off. Before joining Disney, she worked as a freelance sculptor and has created pieces for commercials and television shows. She also sculpted the iceberg for the movie *Titanic*. In 1998, her creativity and success in the world of fine arts led her to receive the 1998 Young Alumni Award.

Today, she now works as a 3-dimensional designer at Walt Disney Imagineering, where joins a team of artists in creating models and characters.

"I feel good when I am making and creating things," Corral said. "My job is a dream for me."

Corral, Adams and Spaulding have all discovered the career opportunities that the Walt Disney Company offers. UWO strives to help current students reach their Disney dreams by promoting the Disney College Program and by providing a top-notch liberal arts education to help prepare students for their future endeavors.

UWO seniors Darren Steger, of Mayville, and Katie Neumann, of Oshkosh, both participated in the Disney College Program and now serve as campus representatives to help make students aware of the kinds of positions and opportunities available through the program.

Neumann and Steger use question-and-answer sessions, posters and other print media on campus to spread the word and to help students see the benefits in pursuing a career with Disney.

"Disney is a name people and companies all over the world recognize," Neumann said. "Even simply having 'Disney' on their resumes can put students above others when interviewing for jobs. Additionally, students can earn transferable skills working at Disney Parks that they wouldn't be able to develop as extensively elsewhere."

Steger believes the life lessons that students can take away from participation in the Disney College Program are unmatched.

"It is simply amazing to witness the level of planning, organization and logistics that go into such a successful company," Steger said.

Alumni who are helping make the magic happen at Disney have all discovered how the company and the skills they acquired at UWO can help make their dreams come true.

"UWO provided me with valuable and practical skills that got my foot in the door to my first job in Los Angeles," Corral said. "I could not have guessed which skills would come in handy, but when the opportunities came, there they were."

Steger believes that each student who discovers and participates in the Disney College Program is another

wish that has been realized.

“I see that each person who participates is another dream that has come true because that person will learn what they are good at as well as what field of study they should direct their passion in.”

Learn more:

- [Homecoming 2013: Where Titans Dare To Dream](#)
- [Disney College Program](#)