

EARNING THEIR EARS

Students mix business with pleasure through Disney internship

By Lindsey Fielder
THE BATTALION

Britney Spell, a junior accounting major, knows what it means to incorporate a childhood memory into a college opportunity. Spell participated in the Walt Disney World College Program for six months in 2001, giving her the chance to work in Orlando and receive college credit at the same time.

"I decided to go to Walt Disney World because I had always loved vacationing there when I was little, and because I needed a break from regular classes," Spell said.

The best thing about working at Disney World, Spell said, was getting to see firsthand how a giant international corporation operates.

"I would recommend the college program to others because it is an excellent way to learn about people from all over the world," Spell said.

Spell, who worked as a lifeguard at Disney's All-Star Resort, had the opportunity to see exactly how important her job was one cool night.

"I noticed some kids struggling in the middle of the pool, so I jumped in to get them. I brought all three of them to the safety side of the pool," she said. "Even though I was freezing and all of my clothes were soaking wet, it was the first time I realized how important my job was."

Hilary Barlow, a senior political science major, heard about the college program from her discussion group leader at Fish Camp. One year later, she decided to attend the mandatory meeting.

"I lost the information on where to be, and then, randomly, I ran into my DG leader on the day of the presentation. She knew where the meeting was and that's where it all started," Barlow said.

Working as a hostess in a restaurant in the Magic Kingdom helped Barlow see how customer satisfaction can make or break a company.

"Employee empowerment is a powerful tool for a company," she said. "If someone was dissatisfied with something, I had the power to fix it without having to check with my boss first."

Aside from the serious aspects of the job, the "happiest place on earth" has a fun side as well. Because Disney employees perform certain roles while on duty, every employee wears a costume instead of a uniform.

Barlow said wearing her assigned costume led to funny moments when kids would ask for her autograph.

"They have autograph books for little kids to get the autographs from all the characters. Well, everyone wears a costume, so kids would come up and ask for my autograph," she said. "Kids were convinced you were someone from a movie."

Students who participate in the college program can receive

college credit for the time they spend at Disney World. Different colleges offer varying credits for the internship.

The best thing Barlow said she gained from her internship was the reactions from employers and interviewers — especially during a recent interview for a summer internship. Once the interviewer noticed Barlow's Disney experience listed on her resume, he said she was the girl they were looking for.

"My interview was over after they saw Disney on my resume. They just started asking me about my internship with Disney, and they never even finished the questions they had prepared to ask," Barlow said. "I got that internship."

Rachel Anderson, a senior agricultural development major, also said the Disney internship can add a competitive edge to a student's resume.

"The college program benefits every major and is beneficial no matter what you want to do," she said.

Anderson said the best thing about working for Disney was getting to meet people from all around the world.

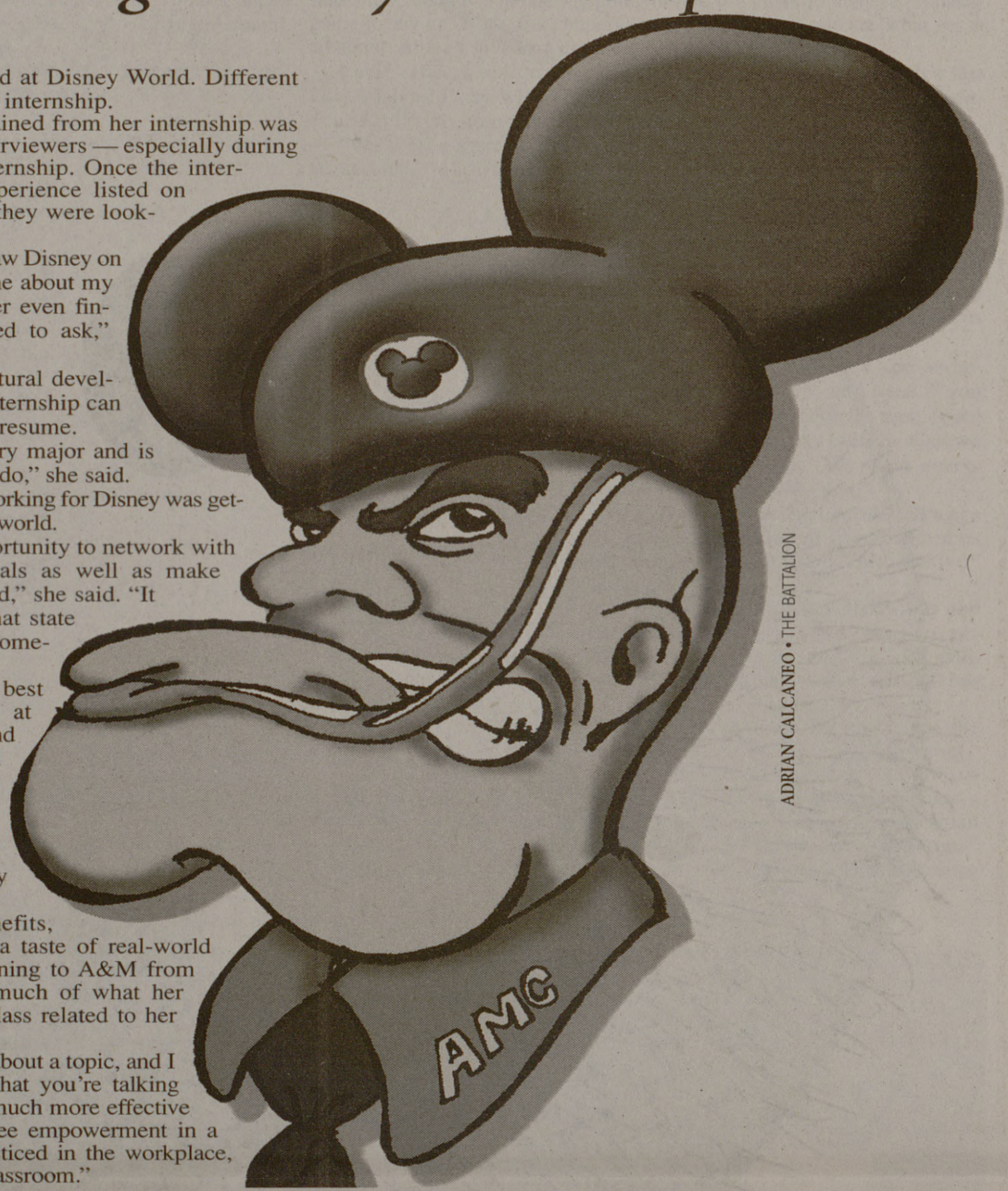
"Being at Disney gave me the opportunity to network with many of the Disney business officials as well as make friends all over the U.S. and the world," she said. "It is so neat to know that no matter what state you are in, you will probably know someone from there."

Anderson also said she made the best friends of her life while working at Disney World. Visits may be few and far between, but she said she will always be close to the people she met at Disney.

"The roommates I had and the people that I worked with, I now consider my closest friends even though we may not see each other often," she said.

In addition to networking benefits, Barlow said her internship provided a taste of real-world experience and education. After returning to A&M from her Disney internship, Barlow said much of what her management professor discussed in class related to her experiences at Disney World.

"[My professor] would start to talk about a topic, and I thought to myself, 'I know exactly what you're talking about already,'" Barlow said. "It was much more effective learning about things such as employee empowerment in a seminar and then see how it was practiced in the workplace, rather than just learning about it in a classroom."



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Annual Fay Lecture Series in Analytical Psychology
"Memories of Our Lost Hands:
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Sonoko Toyoda

Friday, April 5
Opening Reception: 5-6:30p.m.
Introduction to Lecture Series by TAMU President Dr. Ray Bowen
Introduction to Lecture Series by Sonoko Toyoda
Banquet & Entertainment (6:30-9:00p.m.)

All Friday functions will held at: Texas A&M University
Clayton Williams, Jr. Alumni Center

Saturday, April 6
Lecture 1: The Story of the Handless Maiden 9-10:30a.m.
Lecture 2: Hands as Symbols of Feminine Creativity 11-12:30p.m.

Sunday, April 7
Lecture 3: Hands as Symbols of Feminine Spirituality 9-10:30a.m.
Lecture 4: The Way to Recover Our Lost Hands 11-12:30p.m.

All lectures held at Texas A&M University, Memorial Student Center
Rooms 205 & 206

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