Internship Initiative Aims to Retain CMU Talent in Pittsburgh

By Cora Wang

When upperclassmen returned to Carnegie Mellon this fall from around the world, students who participated in a special summer internship program did not have far to travel.

Created in 2004, the Peter C. Dozzi Pittsburgh Internship Initiative is a generous gift from the founder of Pittsburgh-based Jendoco Construction Corp. The initiative provides financial support to CMU students completing unpaid or underpaid summer internships in the Pittsburgh area. It also encourages students to consider living and working in the region following graduation.

The Career and Professional Development Center (CPDC) invites undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines to submit an application for a $1,000 stipend for living and travel expenses. The CPDC selects 10 recipients each year and connects them with social and professional development opportunities through the Regional Internship Center of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

“I was debating between staying here and taking a financial hit or going back home to get a normal job for the summer,” said James Snyder, a junior mechanical engineering major who interned at CMU spinoff Astrobotic Technology Inc. “The scholarship has provided me with the amazing experience of working for a small company and living on my own.”

Snyder enjoys working with composite materials and has used them as head mechanic of the Sigma Phi Epsilon buggy team. During the summer, he applied his experience while working with Astrobotic’s composite team to construct wheel components for the Polaris rover. The company is creating the rover to prospect for water, ice, methane and other resources at the moon's north pole.

While Snyder shoots for the moon, junior biological sciences major Kevin Tan used his internship to leap into neuroscience. He conducted research on the neural basis of mood-related disorders at the Program in Cognitive Affective Neuroscience, a collaboration between University of Pittsburgh and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

“The skills I have acquired from my research leave me well equipped for graduate school, Tan said. “The guidance I am receiving for my personal research project is invaluable, as I am getting to do science first-hand with ‘real scientists.’”

Senior Gabriella Reuda interned with Jovenes Sin Nombres, an initiative of CMU’s Center for the Arts in Society that encourages young Latino immigrants to participate in art projects exploring their cultural traditions and the history of Pittsburgh.
“As a person of Hispanic origin, I really connected with the mission of the program,” Reuda said.

She’s using her experience this fall as she studies abroad in Chile and works with an indigenous Mapuche community on an independent research project.

Senior architecture major Sydney Zalewski interned with the City of Pittsburgh’s Department of City Planning, where she was involved in developing Pittsburgh’s first 25-year master plan.

“Almost every project an architect wants to build must first go through the zoning, code and architectural review process with this department,” Zalewski said. “This internship will help inform what I will be doing soon in my professional practice.”

Carolyn Supinka, a senior in the Bachelor of Humanities and Arts program, explored career options in arts management during her internship with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust’s education and community engagement department. She worked to advocate for children’s access to arts education and to represent the voice of the Pittsburgh arts community as a whole.

“The thing I really like about Pittsburgh is the sense that we are on the rise,” Supinka said.