Networking in the Windy City

Ready to leave on their Study Tour of Chicago are, left to right, front row: Sarah Bouhl, Aritha Berroa, Brittany Yonts, Savannah Hall, Loren Saali, Martina Hill, Liz Nicholson, Victoria Harris, Suzanne Niccum and Dottie Compton. Back row: Instructor Kelsey Brandes, Elizabeth Nelson, Melissa Elmore, Tanetta Bailey, Melissa Batliner, Robricka Miles, Jordan Jones, Raymond Douglas, Marlena Mayfield and Charlie, the bus driver.

Nineteen Interior Design students accompanied instructors Kelsey Brandes and Wayne Whitson on this year’s Study Tour to Chicago. Their four day stay provided an active itinerary and plenty of opportunities to see what this formidable city has to offer.

After arriving and checking in at the downtown Marriott Courtyard, some students took the evening to investigate Navy Pier where they could view an expanse of Lake Michigan, sample a variety of foods, shop, and enjoy one of the premier city skylines in the world.

Great learning experience

On Friday, students traveled to the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Oak Park, Illinois. This landmark was built in the later part of the 19th century and offered a spectacular guided tour. Aritha Berroa, student, said that the building inspired her, adding, “I was impressed to actually see Wright’s ideas, since the home was built so long ago.” Shawn Neill, student, said that “visiting Frank Lloyd Wright’s home was a real life goal and a dream of mine that came true that day.” He described the building and tour as powerful, amazing, perfect, inspiring, and breathtaking, a brilliant achievement!

An insider’s view

Students also visited Chicago’s famous Merchandise Mart, a 25 story building of showrooms exhibiting wallpaper, tile, furniture, textiles, and all the latest finishes and accessories for the interior designer. Floors one and two are open to the public, but only industry representatives are allowed above the second floor. Instructor Kelsey Brandes stated that students especially enjoyed the “dream home” which they viewed on the first floor of Merchandise Mart.

Saturday’s experiences centered on K-BIZ, the most elaborate Kitchen and Bath trade show in the country. Students had a unique opportunity to view the newest and most innovative fixtures and furnishings for kitchens and baths. Koehler, a well-known vendor, made a big impression on students, especially their items designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Shawn Neill said the trade show “will help me in the future with my design ideas and possibilities.”

Students also visited Chicago’s Millennium Park. The Park is full of art work and featured the AT&T cloud and an exhibit of abstract art work from China. Students could also relax in the beautiful gardens at the site.

Instructor Kelsey Brandes said that the study tour “is a great experience and an opportunity to become more familiar with the interior design industry.” Students mingled with some of the top professionals in the field and practiced their networking skills.

The tour participants arrived back on campus late Sunday evening, excited, satisfied with their tour experiences, and ready to take on the design world!


“The trip was a unique opportunity to get an inside perspective of the design business. I was grateful to be able to explore areas of major design industry venues that are open to designers-only. . .”

ELIZABETH NELSON

SCTD student members of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) practice their leadership skills and gain real work experience while doing something for the community. They also have opportunities to attend the local professional chapter’s events and benefit from the networking and educational opportunities available to them. At a recent meeting of the ASID student chapter, advisor Carla Wallace helped students plan some future projects.

On the agenda were: completing dining room murals, the playground and deck areas at the Center of Hope and donating to the school supplies drive for the Center; participating in the Festival of Trees and Lights; organizing fundraisers for the organization and participating in a continuing education event at Miller’s Fancy Bath and Kitchen. Pictured at the recent day ASID meeting are, standing, left to right, Instructor and advisor, Carla Wallace, Terri Serge and Elizabeth Nelson. Seated, Le Nguyen and Sharon Stubbins.