CARPE DIEM—SEIZE THE MOMENT

Emily Pei is not your average student. Before graduating from UNI Emily has already travelled to New York and Hong Kong, interning with big name brands like Cabela and Tommy Hilfiger. And that is just the icing on top of her loaded career cake. Emily is a Senior at UNI majoring in Textiles and Apparels (TAPP). TAPP is more than fashion design, it focuses on the knowledge about industry processes and products, which includes product development, testing, and merchandising.

High School Emily did not envision herself a TAPP major. In fact, she had no idea where she was going to go or what she was going to do. “When I was younger my cousin and I used to play ‘fashion designer’ in her basement. My mom made ice skating costumes so there was a lot of fabric and a few mannequins for us to play with. It was always fun to pretend but I never intended it to be where I would end up. I never actually knew what I wanted to do when I grew up, I had broad interests and a lot of diverse skills. My aptitude tests never even told me what to do, I always ended up in the middle of all fields. It was really hard for me to choose a school cause I didn’t even know what I wanted to do, which I thought was the only way to choose a college. It was down to Biology at Luther, Pre Pharmacy at Central, or Textiles and Apparel at UNI. When I received the CSBS Scholarship at UNI, the decision was made. About a year into the major I started to realize that my wide interests and skills were a perfect fit for the textile industry. Geometry is in pattern making, chemistry and physics are in coloring and physical testing. History is in trends, business and math are in merchandising, and the list continues.”

Her favorite class at UNI is Quality Assurance, which allowed her to learn about the more technical side to the apparel industry. “I have always been interested in science and was glad I was finally able to utilize my interest in a segment of my field. In quality assurance, professionals use ASTM and AATCC Standards as well as proprietary standards to work with overseas factories and ensure consumer product safety and overall quality. Quality assurance challenges the professional’s analysis abilities and problem solving as well as expands our bounds through international communication.”

Emily’s favorite UNI memory, so far, is her travels to New York where she interned at Tommy Hilfiger as the Production Intern dealing with children’s tees. Her experience as an intern was good; living in New York was even better. Emily also interned for Cabela’s overseas Hong Kong office. “That was the best thing I have ever done in my life. Hong Kong is a crazy place with so many different cultural influences. I gained so much perspective on the industry as well as myself. I was an American Asian living in Asia and it was a very strange experience for me. All my life, I have grown up in cities where I have only known maybe 2 other Asian people that weren’t related to me. It was so different seeing so many other Asian people. My boss, a UNI Alum- Melissa East, was a great mentor to me as well as the other intern from UNI—Morgan Gaffney. Hong Kong is a BEAUTIFUL island filled with so many different things from beaches to enormous skyscrapers. I was so inspired living there that I made it one of my goals to return (either for work or for leisure). Melissa arranged for us to visit factories and mills in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. It was unbelievable how much I saw and learned.” Emily’s other favorite memory at UNI is being the co-director of UNI’s annual fashion show.

In the future Emily would like to move to a big city and get a great job. “What I like about big cities is that there are SO many options for great food and I am kind of a Foodie. My Instagram is filled with food. Being Asian, it is important to me to have good Asian food nearby. I also love the public transportation available. I don’t really like driving because it’s a lot of stress and responsibility. My favorite public transportation system is the MTR in Hong Kong. It is so clean and just awesome. I would like to get a job in some sort of mass product company versus couture or boutique. It’s crazy to control that many units dis-
“It is one thing to go to class every day and do the work. It is another to take initiative and accept opportunities that are placed in front of you.”

-Emily Pei

Experiences I have gained from Textiles and Apparel have been outstanding. It is one thing to go to class every day and do the work. It is another to take initiative and accept opportunities that are placed in front of you. I accepted every role of responsibility that was ever announced and did crazy things like travel across the globe for a whole summer to work somewhere that I didn’t know. But I have found that the more things you do outside of your comfort zone, the better they are for you and will reward you down the road. I know that it sounds easy to just say inspirational things like that, but I have an extremely close comfort zone, I am shy and introverted, I always think before I act, and typically don’t do crazy things. I always think back to the night before I left for Hong Kong. I sat on my driveway in the middle of the night (to take a break from packing) and cried because I didn’t want to go. But it turned out so well, I couldn’t have even imagined what I would gain from it.

Her advice to a future STEM panther: “Do it. STEM fields are so fun. If not, I challenge you to find the “STEM” in your major. I know we all can’t be engineers or mathematicians, but look into what you are learning and apply STEM to it just as I did. It is true that my major is not a traditional STEM major, but there are so many elements that are based in STEM. I have always loved science, but didn’t choose to major in biology, which turned out okay. I was still able to utilize my science background in quality assurance. I also have to admit that I hated taking AP Stat in high school; but I was able to use the base level of statistical knowledge I had to put together a price analysis on my own for my bosses at Tommy Hilfiger, which they loved!”

Above are just a few photos highlighting Emily’s opportunities at UNI

Carpe Diem– Seize the Moment

Story by Stefani Keller, UNI STEM Program Associate, Communications smkeller@uni.edu

STEM at UNI and STEM Education at UNI supports the Vision & Mission of UNI by engaging UNI students, faculty, & staff in STEM campus programs & outreach for K12 students and educators.

If you are interested in being featured for one of our STEM Stories please contact us. We would love to hear your story.

Contact Us

UNI STEM
229 East Bartlett
319.273.7399
www.uni.edu/stemed