

Inspiring trip to US enjoyed by STEM students

In partnership with the IDA and I Wish, global tech company Park Place Technologies gave two young women from Cork the opportunity to travel to the USA to gain valuable work experience within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). Here Emma Brennan (above) from Bandon, and Amy Donlan, (below) from Glanmire, share their experiences



By Emma Brennan, who is studying a BSc (Hons) in Software Development at CIT

WHEN I think back to my experience at Park Place Technologies, it seems almost impossible to put how incredible it was into words. From the minute I stepped foot off the plane in Boston, to my final day in Cleveland, it surpassed every expectation I had of it and more.

I thought I knew what was in store for me, but I can't believe how much I learnt over the 10 days! We were fortunate enough to get first-hand experience and see just how much work and innovation goes into running a company on a global scale.

I was very apprehensive before the trip, as this was a completely new experience for me, and visiting such a huge global company headquarters was nerve wracking to say the least!

Once we got there though, I immediately felt at ease; everyone was so helpful, more than happy to talk to us and made sure we were looked after.

As I'm studying Software Development, I assumed I'd be spending my days learning all about the IT section of the company. Though this was the area I was probably most excited about it was great to get the chance to visit all the other departments of the company, from Marketing, Sales, and HR, to even Legal and

Compliance. I had no idea just how many different roles there were, and I got to meet people from all sorts of educational backgrounds and learn how they got into technology. It was inspiring to meet people so passionate about their careers.

Making time for some relaxing downtime is just as important as taking in everything that the externship offered. So, when we weren't exhausted because of jet lag, or after a day at the office, the fun continued. The food was to die for, though I don't think I'll ever get used to the American portion sizes!

One of my favourite memories of the trip would have to be kayaking in the lake - the weather was incredible, and the view was even better, further helped by pizza afterwards!

Overall, it was an unforgettable trip and it's safe to say if I had any doubt about whether I was in the right course, the experience showed me the many opportunities I'll have after college, and that the technology industry is right for me! It's fantastic to see an organisation encouraging women into the STEM profession. I would encourage anyone thinking about potentially applying for something like this in the future to grab the opportunity with both hands.

By Amy Donlan from Glanmire, studying for a BSc (Hons) in Business Information Systems at UCC

To say I was excited about the externship is

an understatement. It sounded like a fantastic experience to see different areas of the business. If only I knew before I went that it would be even better than I imagined.

Although the trip seemed a bit daunting at first, excitement quickly took over.

We were greeted at the airport with a friendly welcome putting us at ease straight away. I was nervous before our first day in the office, as this was all very new to me and I wasn't sure how the people would be within such a huge global business. Every single person we encountered, be it during a meeting or just passing by could not have been more generous with their time and really made us both feel so welcome. It was great to spend time in different offices to get a feel of how everything works and the different jobs and opportunities that are available.

During the second week, we learned more about not only the technical side of the company, but also delving deeper into the different departments that allow the business to function. We spent time with sales, marketing, HR, IT, operations and more.

To pick out just one highlight would be impossible, but I found it truly refreshing to hear often there is an option to move to a completely different role within the organisation. I always feared I would be stuck in the same job forever with no room to change or develop my skills, so it was great to learn that this definitely not the case.

At the end of the internship, we delivered a capstone presentation of key learnings on our placement to senior management, including the CEO. For me, this was something I was initially apprehensive about as I had no previous presenting experience, however an opportunity like this taken you out of your comfort zone and makes you realise you can achieve anything you want to had it not been for this experience.

I developed skills I didn't even know I had and got a fantastic insight to every angle of the business. I think it's fair to say that this opportunity is not something every soon-to-be third year university student gets it really has proved invaluable to me and made me even more determined to pursue my career in this industry.



Amy Donlan from Glanmire, a student at UCC, who recalls her externship.