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Architecture Student Inspired when Schools & Business Collaborate

ROCKLIN – When Peter Sushch signed up for Engineering Support Technology as a sophomore at Rocklin High School, it put him on a path that would focus his education and career plans. He benefited from the Engineering Support Technology (EST) course taught by Dan Frank of Rocklin High School. It whet his appetite for design and when Granite Bay High School’s Steve Dolan visited the EST class to describe the Architecture, Construction and Engineering ROP course, Sushch decided to enroll as a senior. As a result, Sushch is gaining work experience as an intern at Williams + Paddon (www.williamspluspaddon.com), a nationally recognized architectural firm based in Roseville, and is making plans to study architecture in college.

“I was always interested in design, art and architecture,” said Sushch. “In Mr. Frank’s class at Rocklin High School, I realized how much I enjoyed it as I got familiar with Autodesk 3D design software. In the Engineering Support Technology class, I completed projects that I eventually used to demonstrate my skills in the interview for the internship.”

Sierra College Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) has been supporting the Rocklin High School Engineering Support Technology program for several years according to instructor Dan Frank. “The engineering lab was updated substantially this year through a sub-grant from the Sierra STEM Community Collaborative, managed by Sierra College CACT,” said Frank. “The funding was used to purchase and install new Computer Numerical Control (CNC) milling machines that cut materials in three dimensions as well as create a tool room modeled on industry standard practices.”

Encouraging educators and business leaders to work together to inspire students, provide technical education and prepare them for employment is the goal of the Sierra STEM Community Collaborative, explained Carol Pepper-Kittredge, Sierra College CACT Director. “Sierra College, through the Sierra STEM grant provided by California Community College Chancellor’s Office, supports college and high school programs to attract students to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM),” said Pepper-Kittredge. “The Sierra STEM Collaborative updates equipment, provides professional development for instructors, coordinates teacher externships and encourages partnerships between schools and employers.”

Brian Whitmore, Associate Principle, Williams + Paddon, is familiar with Frank’s program. “I am very impressed with what Sierra STEM and Rocklin High School have done for Peter’s skill set,” said Whitmore. “It was clear to us after seeing Peter’s portfolio that these programs offer a robust design experience that fits seamlessly with the same computer programs and skills we use here at Williams + Paddon on a daily basis.”

According to Sushch, the ROP course gave him the skills that helped land the internship. “We learned how to make an appropriate resume, how to put together a portfolio, and what to wear to an interview,” said Sushch. “Mr. Dolan helped me prepare to answer questions about my experience and advised me on what questions to ask during an interview.”

Steve Dolan explained that the Architecture, Construction and Engineering ROP program at Granite Bay High School prepares students from several area high schools to go into architecture, the trades or construction management. Through his relationships with employers, Dolan places students in internships where they can gauge their interest in pursuing further training to succeed in the building industry.

“I’ve been working with Williams + Paddon since 2000,” said Dolan. “The experience provided by Williams + Paddon lights a fire that motivates students to go into careers in architecture. I saw that Peter was ready to get serious and knew he had excellent design skills so I recommended that he interview for an internship.”

Whitmore explained that Williams + Paddon is committed to exposing students to the field of architecture. “Our interest is primarily in ensuring that the future of our career remains intriguing,” said Whitmore. “We believe that by offering students an opportunity to engage with what we do, we often make a positive impression that keeps that student on that career path and eventually makes a strong addition to our industry.”

According to Whitmore, “Peter works in Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) programs to make changes requested by our quality assurance staff and uses SketchUp, a 3D modeling program, to develop base models for project designs. Peter’s work ethic and strong skills have made him an integral part of our team.”

Sushch says that he is grateful for the internship experience. “The people are great,” said Sushch. “They know my skill level so they will rarely give me something that is too difficult for me to accomplish. I like the variety of the work and they taught me many new skills, revealing the full potential of the design programs. I am very grateful for the opportunity Williams + Paddon gave me to see how work is done, and design is applied, in the real world.”

Peter plans on attending Cosumnes River College, a California Community College, to complete a two year architecture program and then transferring to Cal Poly or California College of the Arts to complete his degree in architecture. “The experience at Williams + Paddon has definitely strengthened my desire to pursue architecture as my career,” said Sushch.

Learn about the Sierra STEM Community Collaborative at www.sierraschoolworks.com or contact Carol Pepper-Kittredge, Director, Center for Applied Competitive Technologies, Sierra College, at cpepper-kittredge@sierracollege.edu or (916) 660-7517.

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