Press release: 2016: 07: 21: USFSP Students Part of Winning Team in TBTF Boot Camp

University of South Florida St. Petersburg, Office of University Advancement.
USFSP STUDENTS PART OF WINNING TEAM IN TBTF BOOT CAMP

Two USF St. Petersburg students in the Kate Tiedemann College of Business recently ranked as part of the winning team in the Tampa Bay Technology Forum's (TBTF) third Exploratory Labs Boot Camp.

Eight USFSP students in all—one-third of the boot camp’s overall participants—took part in the six-week training experience. In addition to weekly trainings, networking events and meetings, the students also participated in an intensive week of day-long trainings. They were divided among four teams with students from other institutions, including USF and St. Petersburg College, and then competed in final business plan presentations at the SPC EpiCenter. The winners receive free Cisco Business Solutions training and can sit for the certification test for free.

USFSP undergraduate students Meredith Cook, a senior majoring in Management and Information...
Systems, and Michael Onagoruwa, a freshman pre-business major, were part of the winning team called Creative Warriors. Because the boot camp was themed around the concept of the Internet of Things (IOT), the group developed and proposed a business concept that incorporates the internet in mobile technologies. Their final presentation was focused on providing a mobile app solution called “MiSPOT!” (pronounced “my spot”) for parking at major venues, such as Raymond James Stadium, that would be beneficial to both the consumer and venue management.

“I think the experience was life-changing,” said Cook, who works as a manager at Office Depot and has been with the company for about eight years. “Going to the labs, I realized that all the skills that I have can transfer to any field, but especially to the IT field. It helped me gain a lot of confidence in the abilities that I have.”

The Exploratory Labs Boot Camp isn't geared only for business and technology majors: Public Policy and Psychology majors also are encouraged to participate because of their critical thinking and analytical skills, and research capabilities. The first student who was hired after completing the program was a Public Policy major. Several students from other majors also have been hired as a result of their experiences with the program and its networking opportunities.

“The students are exposed to professionals from a variety of different disciplines and are learning from them,” said Cherie Collins, faculty advisor for the TBTF student chapter at USFSP—of which several of the students are members. “They're being exposed to cutting-edge design and cyber security technology and also are getting a lot of feedback from these leading experts.”

“This essentially is a six-week job interview from start to finish,” said Pat Gehant, coordinator for the Exploratory Lab Boot Camp. Gehant described the group of students from USFSP as very professional and impeccably dressed. “The students who participated from USFSP were all standouts this year.”

Gehant said the boot camp has an 84 percent success rate with students who enter the program seeking either an internship or a job. “Another value proposition to students who participate in the program is networking,” she said. “They are given an opportunity to build a network that includes some of the leading business professionals in the area from companies like Tech Data, AgileThought, and Valpak. This type of connection-building is invaluable and helps to open doors.”
The next Exploratory Labs Boot Camp will be held Jan. 16.
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