This annual trek is a capstone experience in the program. It is the culmination of two quarters of preparation that includes coursework, visits to Chicago-area sites, and an array of interactions with professionals through the monthly MSLCE speaker series, various courses, and campus events. It allows students to see the value of the hard and soft skills they learned during the fall and winter quarters in a broad spectrum of creative sector organizations. It is also an opportunity for the students to visualize themselves within these types of organizations.

The students began their journey several weeks before leaving Chicago. As part of the Professional Development course, they were divided into teams of six and each group was tasked with conducting background research on three of the sites they were going to visit. Students put the knowledge acquired in the classroom to work by looking into the key strategic, organizational, financial, and legal matters affecting each of the sites. Each team briefed the rest of the students at a special session that took place a week before departure, and their respective reports were compiled into 50-page dossiers that students could consult in preparation for a particular site.

Once in Los Angeles and New York, students heard from a wide range of alumni and professionals at organizations ranging from HBO and AMC Networks to The Museum of Modern Art and Christie’s, from Marvel Entertainment and Tristar Productions to Ogilvy & Mather and Jack Morton Worldwide, and from Creative Artists Agency and William Morris Endeavor to Facebook and Pandora. Whether it is television, film, fine arts, marketing, digital media or talent management, MSLCE students took advantage of their spring break to immerse themselves in the life of the creative world.

Pablo J. Boczkowski
AT&T Research Professor, School of Communication
Faculty Director, MSLCE
**SCOTT LEDERMAN**  
Lederman realized long ago that he wants to work in television. As an undergrad, he produced and directed a game show based on the Newlywed Game, and then worked his way up to Vice President and ultimately President of the University of Delaware's student television network.  
"Being responsible for an entire network, its shows, and its members was an experience that has helped me become a better leader, communicator, and collaborator."

**KRISTAL ZHENG**  
Zheng worked as a flight attendant until a few years ago. She quit so she could pursue a career in the creative fields, where, she says, "my passion truly lies." Zheng hopes the MSLCE program will open doors for her and give her the skills and opportunities to break into the jobs she's passionate about.  
"The program is just a perfect fit for me. It is so practical. It basically provides everything I need," Zheng said.

**JARED CORAK**  
As an undergrad at Northwestern, Corak got the chance to write the music and lyrics for the Waa-Mu Show, one of the big student musicals staged on campus. The experience came at the peak of his interest in musical theatre. "Then I kind of realized that some of my other passions—required a better understanding of the creative industries and a more business-minded approach to things."

**SETH ZIMMERMAN**  
Zimmerman has built a career in the media and entertainment industry with internships at the Daily Show and World News Tonight, and a job with the Oprah Winfrey Show.  
"I got a job doing research and wound up as the senior research coordinator for the show. They asked me to stay on when they switched to the Oprah Winfrey Network." In 2011, he fulfilled his dream of graduating from the Second City training program. His goal is to be a creative director for a theatre company.

**SARAH BERGESON**  
Bergeson grew up close to Disney World, and its proximity seems to have worn off on her. The Northwestern theatre graduate is interested in pursuing a career in a very specific kind of performance: the kind that goes on at theme parks like Disney. "Your audience is right in the middle of everything, they become part of the story. Theme park entertainment has to run at a way higher capacity. A theme park is open 12 to 14 hours a day and there's always something happening. It's a bigger effort but at the same time it's a more cohesive product."

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VSA PARTNERS

While touring the VSA offices, students were offered a glimpse into how design thinking can be applied to branding and marketing, especially in a design-centric culture. VSA Partner’s Dave Ritter explained that organizations, specifically those who are perceived as one thing by their customers or the greater public but wholly embrace another image of themselves, do not “need to change who they are.” Rather, they have to personalize the connection to their clients and personify who they are as a company by projecting their internal culture. In other words, empathize with your customer.

-John Matthew Simon

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEXICAN ART

Opened to the public in 1987, this museum was the vision of Pilsen local Carlos Tortolero, a public school teacher at the time, who organized a group of fellow educators to create a space for exhibiting fine art from Mexican culture while also serving the community through a commitment to accessibility and education. Tortolero told students about the difficulties of starting an organization like this and the joys of overcoming challenges. 

“Everybody in the arts world said that we were just teachers,” he said, “and the word ‘just’ was like a dirty word.” Despite the obstacles, The museum thrived and is now home to some of the premiere examples of historical and modern Mexican art work.

-Benjamin Levine

GOODMAN THEATRE

At the Goodman, students sat down with Producer Steve Scott to discuss his role in the day-to-day running of the theatre, its history, and what’s next for this Chicago institution. Scott has executed over 200 productions at the Goodman, working closely with both artistic and executive staff to oversee the realization of the shows. “It’s a lot of answering questions and putting out fires,” he said. Scott acts as not only an artistic sounding board and resource to staffers, but also as a problem-solver when challenges arise with a production. Afterwards, students went on a special backstage tour, getting glimpses into rooms speaking with staff who facilitate the season of productions and educational programs.

-Kate Leggett (Photo by Kate Leggett)

SPEAKER SERIES

Harry Gottlieb has been through a lot in his career. His company, Jellyvision, made computer games that were some of the biggest hits of the ‘90s. His company has also almost gone out of business three times. So when he was asked to briefly describe his professional path, he responded, “Brief is the only part that’s going to be hard for me.” Before Gottlieb was making computer games like You Don’t Know Jack and Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, he was a teenager interested in making fun, educational movies about dull subjects. His company recently launched ALEX, an interactive program that uses humor and straightforward language to teach corporate employees about health care plans and retirement savings. It’s currently used by 70 of the Fortune 500 companies.

Christine Dudley
Deputy Director
Illinois Film Office

During her talk, Dudley joked that each morning she and her staff light a candle to Dick Wolf. The reason? Wolf, the producer behind the Law and Order franchise, has made Chicago home to the NBC productions of Chicago Fire, Chicago P.D., Chicago Med, and the in-development Chicago Law. For an office focused on bringing film and television productions to Illinois, these are all positive developments. “They have laid down such a strong footprint,” Dudley said of Wolf’s Chicago franchise, “and because of that it generates more opportunity.”

Jane Gottlieb
VP/Executive Producer
CBS Marketing Group

Jane Gottlieb’s career was largely self-invented and built brick by brick in small steps. Days out of Northwestern, she landed a job in ‘corporate AV’ (as it was then called) and never looked back. A series of bigger jobs led to her current position at CBS. Gottlieb functions as a sort of in-house creative agency for the network, producing large events, presentations and special video projects. The most important of these is the CBS Upfront, a huge, annual sales event that brings 3,000 advertisers, press, and the TV creative community to Carnegie Hall each May to preview clips of the new season’s shows. “My job is so varied — I can never predict the nature of the next project — but that’s what I love about it.”

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-John Matthew Simon
New York Trek

HAYLEY BULLOCK
The MSLCE Trek to the Big Apple was informative, encouraging, and inspiring. Coming from a nonprofit and performance background, I was surprised and appreciative of the vast insight and knowledge I was able to gain from the experience. As we visited advertising and branding agencies, including Pandora-owned Next Big Sound, Facebook’s Chris Meadows, and Jack Morton & Mather, and heard from various alumni speakers including Alex White of Next Big Sound at Pandora, and Chris Meadows of Facebook, these experiences provided my classmates and me with valuable insight into career development and working in the creative sector. With each site visit and speaker, we gained insight into building a career, regardless of what industry each of us are hoping to be a part of.

An overarching theme of the trip seemed to be the idea of “finding your story.” Through varied quotes and anecdotes, many speakers encouraged us to look for self-awareness and passion in building and transitioning through our careers. As Chris Meadows stated, you must “find your story, find your hook.” He described how he has used his skills and passions to promote his identity and strengths in his career. Coincidentally, later that same day, Adam Tucker, Northwestern alumus and President of Ogilvy & Mather, encouraged us to “have a passion.” He challenged us to consider the question, “What gets you out of bed every morning?” He assured us that if we are passionate about something and can effectively translate that passion to others, opportunities will come.

The most inspiring aspect of interacting with these various companies and speakers was the opportunity to hear about everyone’s backgrounds and the paths that got them to where they are today. At companies such as Jack Morton and The Orchard, we had the opportunity to engage with a panel of speakers, each person described a unique path that shaped and developed their career. I believe this is relevant knowledge for anyone, in any stage of their career. As the job market is becoming more competitive, entering and transitioning through the workforce can seem daunting in any industry. However, many of our speakers reminded us that it is okay to try new things and be open to change and disruption. As Debbie Bisco, entrepreneur and founder of Bisco Productions, said, “Ignore the shoulds.”

Our time in New York encouraged me to follow my passions, tell my story, take risks, and chase opportunity. No matter what background you come from, or where your interests lie, these ideologies will help anyone to build a successful and satisfying career.

Photos: Students in New York City; Site visit to Mother New York. Student writer headshots provided by students. Photos by Kathryn Lawson.
Los Angeles Trek

Over the course of five days in Los Angeles, my fellow MSLCE students and I had amazing opportunities to learn about several media industries by speaking with professionals from film/television, music, and talent agencies.

We began our trip by meeting with several Northwestern alumni led by Marvel Animation Manager Diana Theobald and Tristar Productions Creative Executive Malcolm Gray who gave us an overview of relocating to LA from Evanston. They were attentive to our questions about how Northwestern helped them with the transition and continue to provide them with valuable resources. One major asset mentioned was the Northwestern University Entertainment Alliance (NUEA), which connects Wildcats with a network of alumni and also offers several intriguing Northwestern-only opportunities, such as peer groups. These insights about the power of Northwestern were echoed by later speakers who referenced support received from fellow Northwestern grad as well as the willingness of Wildcats to meet with other students and share their insights.

As we moved through our speakers and site visits, the importance of relationships is a requirement for success. These connections enabled speaker Erika Weinstein at AMC to organically create the mentor/mentee relationship that has served her throughout her career. Finally, Kevin Gore of DMI, a music and entertainment agency, advised us to “find that person” who can be a great mentor and “Vulcan Mind-Meld their brain, suck the wisdom out…then take them out to dinner for the rest of your life.”

The last major theme spread across speakers was the idea of constantly learning. We heard it first from Northwestern alumni and Neophonic Music Supervisor Amanda Thomas who stressed the importance of “never finish[ing] learning the skill set” by continuing to update your knowledge. This theme resurfaced on Thursday when Jamie Salka of Story Pirates told us that despite the “cultural pressure to know something you don’t…you don’t have to know anything.” Rather, you can learn by digging into a new position and getting your hands dirty because “if you’re passionate, curious and excited about what you’re doing” you’ll find a way to figure out how to get it done. The Northwestern alumni we spoke to at Funny or Die later in the day, Head of Digital Chris Bruss, Writer/Director Jake Szymanski, and Amani Munir, repeated this by suggesting that we learn and do everything in order to get a bigger picture on the industry and open more doors by having a wider skill set.

The five days in LA with MSLCE provided my fellow students and I with great insight into the industries represented. Even though I, personally, do not plan to pursue a career in film/television, music, or an agency, I was able to learn several valuable lessons that could not be taught in a classroom.

Over a three-day stretch my classmates and I visited six media organizations, all of which offered a different perspective on making your way in LA. Day One was spent at HBO with President of Series, Late Night, and Specials Casey Bloys and SVP of Original Programming David Levine as well as at AMC Networks with Director of Scripted Programming Erika Weinstein and Director and Manager of Scripted Programming, Stefano Agosto. Day Two featured agencies Creative Artists Agency (CAA) and William Morris Endeavor (WME), and Day Three included comedy site Funny or Die and musical branding pioneers DMI Music.

We had the chance to meet several other executives and Northwestern alumni in informal Q&A sessions our first night in LA and each morning of the week. From music supervision at Neophonic to youth theatre entrepreneurship with Story Pirates, the MSLCE Trek showed off a wide variety of potential careers to youth theatre entrepreneurship with Neophonic, Story Pirates in LA and each morning of the week. From music supervision at Neophonic to youth theatre entrepreneurship with Story Pirates, the MSLCE Trek showed off a wide variety of potential careers within the creative fields.

More than anything, the Trek was an opportunity to see how I’d like living in Los Angeles. I came away from the week feeling good – I met a lot of happy, established professionals who have a stable career in entertainment. Yes, it requires hard work and a little luck to make your way, but it’s possible and seems rewarding. We even got caught in the middle of an Easter egg hunt at Funny or Die –

ZACH HYMAN

Over spring break, the MSLCE program split in half and sent a cohort to both New York and Los Angeles to see the creative industries up-close and personal. Being interested in the film and television industry, I travelled to Los Angeles, and came away with a much deeper understanding of what it’s like to work in Hollywood.

Story Pirates CEO Jamie Salka expanded on that point, explaining that we should “allow passion to fuel productivity.” The entertainment sector thrives on intensity and the best way to stay happy is to work on a project that fuels our creativity. He also encouraged us to never stop learning: “Even now, I don’t know enough. I never know enough.” The best way to grow as a person is to keep throwing yourself into new situations.

As all of us in the MSLCE program transition into spring quarter and eventually the world beyond Northwestern, we’d be wise to keep that lesson in mind.
MAKING MONEY FROM MUSIC IN A DIGITAL WORLD
Peter DiCola, Professor, Pritzker School of Law
How do musicians make money? DiCola is one of the first people to do extensive research on the subject. It is clear that the revenue streams for musicians are undergoing dramatic change and that the future of monetizing music is not selling recordings. He offered a fascinating glimpse into the ways new distribution methods are affecting the creative work. -Benjamin Levine

MODERNIZING AUDIO PRODUCTION
Bryan Pardo, Associate Professor, McCormick School of Engineering
As a classically trained jazz musician who was perplexed by the complex interfaces of audio production tools, Pardo wanted to tackle a fascinating question: "Can designers make technological interfaces more intuitive for novice users?" His research led him to the conclusion that when creative industries create tools that are designed simply and intuitively, they can attract a wide spectrum of users and lead to a further proliferation of ideas. -John Matthew Simon

WORKSHOPS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP 101
David Schonthal, Clinical Assistant Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Kellogg School of Management
“Fail faster to succeed sooner,” Schonthal said as he quoted David Kelley, the founder of the award-winning design firm IDEO, where Schonthal is also a business designer. For the graduate students at this workshop, the notion of accepting failure as a means to advance themselves and their ideas was exciting. He explained how his Business Model Canvas enables entrepreneurs to create a clear business model by breaking it down into key segments, such as the value proposition of the business, and the customer segments the business intends to reach. The BMC deciphers what pains the business will solve for the customer and the gains that will be achieved for that very customer through the organization’s value proposition. Schonthal told students: “do not judge your customer” and “question everything.” Everyone sees and hears the world differently, so in order to find patterns that reinforce our outlook, i.e. our value proposition, we must remain “truly curious.” -John Matthew Simon (Photo by Emily Main)

INTERVIEWING SKILLS
Amanda Schonfeld, Talent Acquisition Leader
VSA Partners
Prior to her current role with VSA Partners, Schonfeld worked at the marketing and consulting agency SapientNitro as a senior hiring manager. Building off her various experiences as a creative recruiter, she recounted a number of positive and negative experiences, both as an interviewer and an interviewee. For example, while most people understand that punctuality is critical to making a great first impression, arriving too early can have an off-putting effect as well. At VSA, the administrative assistants receive a notification when a candidate checks in with the building’s security. An excessively early candidate can quickly become a hassle. “Grab a coffee and relax if you’re more than fifteen minutes early,” Schonfeld told students. Following up isn’t just a form of courtesy; it helps a recruiter connect a specific detail or story to a candidate. With an enormous amount of competition for job opportunities, every word in a thank you email counts. -Scotty Stieber (Photo by Kate Leggett)

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BREAK TIME AT MSLCE

Students in the program work hard, but we managed a few breaks throughout the quarter, including a trip to see Treasure Island, a production at Lookingglass Theatre directed by Tony Award-winner and Northwestern alumna Mary Zimmerman, dinner with alumni at Cassell's on the Los Angeles trek, and some quality time in the galleries at MoMA on the NYC trek.

MSLCE GIVES BACK

A group of MSLCE students and staff volunteered at PAWS Chicago (Pets Are Worth Saving), a national model in animal sheltering committed to bringing an end to the killing of homeless cats and dogs. PAWS staff put us to work cleaning and mopping their back rooms and kennel room and then rewarded us with some quality time with the oh-so-adoptable pets.

THREE QUESTIONS WITH CLAUDIO E. BENZECRY

Associate Professor, School of Communication

How did your study of the Colón Opera House lead you to your current project looking at the world of high-end fashion shoes? My first book, The Opera Fanatic, was an exploration of what it means to love something and started my journey of exploring the subjective as a particular kind of category. Instead of opposing it to what is “objective” I became interested in how it is a particular knowledge form that needs to be studied systematically. So as a follow up to a book that explored in depth the collaborative work of producing the opera fanatic as a peculiar embodiment of taste, instead of the more obvious ethnography of fandom or musical practices, I thought of another subject that is usually conceived as either under-determined with “social” character or as irrational and frivolous: fashion. At first I encountered the work of trend forecasters and started investigating what was the relationship between what consumers did and what tastemakers predicted, but there were obvious links missing. To be able to see the renewing palette of colors and materials consumers encounter season after season, I started thinking of what would be a mediation; who are the ones actually using those recommendations and making them into finalized objects to be circulated as commodities? That is how I stumbled upon the idea of writing a book about shoe production. There is nothing at the same time more distinctively individualized and widespread than female footwear! This book renews my interest in what is the micro and collective assemblage of categories that are usually thought of as non-sociological or as private responses, moving from the study of musical passion into the realm of aesthetic judgment about design, shifting towards a new emphasis on the visual and tactile character of those evaluations. Unlike the localized world of opera fans, I’m following here the many mediations through which a shoe is put together around the globe.

What first drew you to the topic of globalization? I don’t know if I can answer this without explaining where I got some of these ideas from. I was a student of Neil Brenner and Harvey Molotch at NYU, and had also taken classes with Saskia Sassen and other scholars who are very much interested at the political economy level of the link between urban and globalization, but I always thought they didn’t do enough justice to the interaction between the macro and the micro – usually gave too much weight to the former – and to how meaning and individual experience played a role. In the last few years there has been an upswing in books by historians and anthropologists (Greg Grandin on whaling and the slave trade, Paul Gootenberg on cocaine, Anna Tsing on rubber and mushrooms, Caroline Knowles on flip flops) showing the intersection between globalization, commodity production, the multiple meanings attached to it and individual lives that inspired me as to think of my own work within those new coordinates.

How can the sociology of culture approach be useful for understanding the digital age? I think there are three ways to respond to this. The first one is that when we think of digital culture we usually think of disembodied, de-territorialized phenomena, and one of the approaches from the sociology of culture (the production of culture paradigm) actually allows you to study what are the mechanisms to “place” culture. There are still institutions, rewards and careers behind the new ways of producing culture. The same applies to distribution platforms. The second one is that ethno graphic approaches to the study of digital culture should allow us to see all the infrastructural work of maintaining things in place, the workers who are at the warehouses, the work or repair and upkeep to have things running as we have gotten used to. The third one is that meaning is still generated in a way that could benefit from a rich hermeneutical approach – what people have called “cultural” sociology, and that the celebratory discourses of innovation and disruption are themselves phenomena to be analyzed sociologically.

Professor Benzecry will teach 'Culture and Globalization' for the MSLCE program during the spring quarter.
SPRING SPEAKER SERIES

April 7  Femke Speelberg, Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings, The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
         Daniel Danzig, Principal, Danzig & Associates, Member of The Museum Group

May 5  Mark Hoebee, Producing Artistic Director, Paper Mill Playhouse

First Thursday of each month at 5:15pm in Frances Searle #1-421.  
Free + open to the public.  
Scan the QR code or visit http://creative.northwestern.edu/speaker_series to register.

LEARN MORE

Sign up for an online information session at http://communication.northwestern.edu/programs/mslce/events.

Interested in applying? The next deadline for fall 2016 or winter 2017 admission is May 1, 2016.