A core element of the educational philosophy that provides the framework for the MSLCE program is the integration of theory and practice. During the fall, winter, and spring quarters, this manifests in the steady stream of industry speakers, the regular site visits to creative sector organizations, the emphasis on practical applications of concepts learned in the classroom, and the weeklong trek to Los Angeles and New York during spring break.

But the summer quarter is when students have the chance to put what they have learned during the academic year into practice full time and in a real-life setting. With the assistance of Assistant Director Colin DeKuiper and the entire EPICS team, our students worked hard to find and secure internships suitable to their expertise and career goals. The breadth and depth — both by geography and by industry within the creative sector — of the resulting internship sites are a testament to their hard work, inherent talent, as well as the intellectual and academic growth they’ve achieved since starting the program. From Viacom in Los Angeles to the Anchorage Museum in Alaska, and from Burning Man in the Nevada desert to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, and from Zync Music in New York to the FX Group in Shanghai, the MSLCE program is leaving a footprint anywhere and everywhere. Kudos to our students!

I personally can’t wait to hear more about their experiences this summer. If you’re in the same boat, check out the Creative Buzz blog on our website now and this column in the fall newsletter!

Pablo J. Boczkowski
AT&T Research Professor, School of Communication
Faculty Director, MSLCE

PITCHING CREATIVE PROJECTS

In her Pitching Creative Projects course, Laverne McKinnon steered students through various exercises and self-assessments, in order to anchor the mechanics of pitching in self-awareness and emotional and social intelligence. With that foundation, students developed the flexibility to craft and adapt the style, tone, and composition of their pitches to most effectively and compellingly fit both the project and pitch recipients. McKinnon challenged the class to expand and refine their levels of awareness and connectivity. -Laura Hess

CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

When discussing globalization, the idea of cultures crossing borders and oceans comes to mind. Professor Claudio Benzecry’s course took that basic framework and extended it beyond traditional modes of thinking to discuss how to globalize the creative class. Prof. Benzecry’s class effectively fused traditional theoretical perspectives with contemporary, realistic examples to show how business models and approaches morph as a result of more globally diversified audiences. -Scotty Stieber

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR CREATIVE ENTERPRISES

Students presented marketing plans for potential businesses and organizations as part of the final project for the Marketing Strategies course, taught by Richard Kolisky. Throughout the course, students learned the core marketing principles and methodologies of all different kinds of industries, and gained deep insight into how each market operates under different organizational levels. -Dan L

NUVENTION: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ARTS

Led by Gregg Latterman, the NUvention Arts course was a deep dive into entrepreneurship, specifically geared towards those interested in start-ups in the creative arts. The course wasn’t simply bent on lectures, comparative analyses, and rote memorization of organizational structures, however. From the first day of class students were divided into groups with the intent of creating lean start-ups to be built over the 10 weeks of the course. -John Matthew Simon

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LEADING CREATIVE TEAMS

During the final Leading Creative Teams class, taught by Gail Berger, students presented their “vision of leadership.” The results perfectly reflected the unique road students traveled this year. At the start, students focused on personal discovery, learning more about their strengths and weaknesses, before moving on to management and negotiation strategies. At the end Berger reiterated the importance of team motivation, building a positive environment where risks are encouraged, and never letting personal politics get in the way of innovation. -Zach Hyman

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STUDENTS

LAURA HESS
She isn’t a director or a producer, but Hess’ dream is to help make documentaries catalysts for change. The ultimate goal: engaging audiences with inspiring stories to promote social change. “The whole reason I am going back to school is that my focus has shifted away from performing to documentary film, primarily as an engagement strategist. Essentially, I want to produce campaigns for films in such a way that support social change and participation.”

ALLISON RIDDLE
Riddle has long known her life would revolve around the arts, but until a couple of years ago she thought that would mean a career in sculpting. Two years ago she moved to Chicago and discovered her love of comedy. Now, Riddle is developing a project, writing, and potentially filming sketches so that they can be distributed online. “The program has allowed me that chance to change my mind and be a little unsure. It has exposed me to people from such diverse creative backgrounds that they help shape my creative future.”

BEN LEVINE
Levine took an unconventional route to jumpstart his creative career. He joined the Israeli army. After graduating in 2011, he moved to Israel and soon found himself driving a tank. “That was a very transformative thing for me in a lot of ways.” A couple years later, Levine returned home with a wider perspective of the world and a desire to pursue a career in art and music. “A place like Northwestern and a program like this is so fresh and modern and so specifically focused on what I’m doing, it just seemed like a no brainer.”

EDWIN ZHANG
Zhang graduated from the University of California, San Diego, where he majored in international studies and economics. While in undergrad he realized that even professional fields that don’t appear creative need employees who can think outside the box in order to thrive. Zhang wants to take the skills he learns at Northwestern “to lead my own company to be creative and lead my team to be creative.”

BRIANNA MATTHEWS
As a kid, Matthews liked movies. A lot. Born and raised in Boulder, Colorado, Matthews would spend hours watching movies while her mom worked. “Instead of hiring a babysitter, my mom would drop us off at the movies for a double feature and pick us up after work. That is where it all started.” She applied to MSLCE to better understand the rapidly changing movie industry, and hopes to someday own her own indie production company.

LINLING NAVARRO
Navarro has set her sights high: she wants to be a pop star. “The end goal is to become a professional singer, performing in huge venues, touring, selling albums.” It is an ambitious goal, and one she’s been already working towards for years. She hopes MSLCE will be a great way for her to become even more prepared to enter the music industry. “My plan is to use this program, learn as much as I can about the industry, and after that, just keep on my professional career as a singer.”

Photos provided by students.
SOCIAL MEDIA & ANALYTICS

How do we create and manage our identities online? Professor Jeremy Birnholtz joined the MSLCE cohort to discuss his focus on human-computer interaction, particularly with social media. Students learned about the establishment of virtual boundaries and various dialects within the gay dating app Grindr. Birnholtz noted that people in general “care a lot about how they present themselves online.” He is also interested in how future research and access to data may be affected now that the app has been purchased by a Chinese company. -Scotty Stieber

TECHNOLOGY AND COLLABORATION

Sometimes we are unaware of the little things that affect the way people see and interact with us. That’s why Professor Jeremy Birnholtz joined the MSLCE cohort for a full-day workshop to enhance students’ interaction abilities, especially when it comes to collaborating across distances. “If people aren’t in the same place, give them a place to interact,” Birnholtz said. Through a study he conducted, Birnholtz proved that teams working in a room are more efficient and productive than when they work separately. -Dan Li

NONPROFIT ARTS MANAGEMENT

Professor Michelle Shumate, an expert on nonprofit management, led students through a spring workshop on the subject. Learning about nonprofits is crucial for students interested in the creative fields because so much important work happens in this space; they currently account for 10% of the U.S. workforce. There are blurred lines between a nonprofit, a for-profit, and a government agency, and Shumate broke down how these classifications work. The workshop helped students understand the different kinds of roles organizations take on in this space. -Ben Levine

MARK HOEBEE
Producing Artistic Director
Paper Mill Playhouse

The week that Hoebee arrived in Chicago to speak at the May speaker series event, he and his theatre company won a 2016 Regional Theater Tony Award. “It’s crazy, it’s been a really emotional week,” Hoebee said with a smile. He called winning a Tony “something you dream about,” and pointed out that when he first began working at Paper Mill the company was on the verge of going out of business. “It’s kind of mind blowing.” Towards the end of the event, Hoebee attributed his success to another factor: his time at Northwestern. “Northwestern was so important to me and really totally shaped my life,” he said. “The relationships that were built here for me filtered out across the country, and I would love to pay that back.”
Over 30 MSLCE students are headed to sites around the world to complete their summer internship experience. Check out our blog this summer as well as our next quarterly newsletter for updates on what they're doing and learning.
MSLCE TALENT SHOW
We took a mid-quarter break at Prairie Moon to have the first MSLCE Talent Show! Students flexed their creative muscles and wowed their classmates with stand-up sets, karaoke, spoken word, and even some interpretive dance.

THREE QUESTIONS WITH GAIL BERGER
Assistant Professor of Instruction
Kellogg School of Management
McCormick School for Engineering
School of Education and Social Policy

Can you briefly describe the app you’re developing, and who you think will find it most useful?
The app that I am developing, iEvolve360, is a tool that will help people easily provide and obtain feedback from each other. It is useful for anyone who is looking to grow and improve and can be used in academic and corporate contexts. By making it simple and straightforward to give and request feedback on a regular basis, teams and companies can create a “culture of feedback.” In other words, the stigma and fear often associated with constructive feedback will be removed, and instead people will truly view feedback as an opportunity to grow and develop.

In addition the app will be a tool for people to receive feedback about their strengths so that they can continue to develop their talents and leverage them to propel performance. When feedback is only provided on an annual or semi-annual basis during a formal performance review, people associate feedback with evaluation and assessment. They cannot therefore adopt the mindset needed to embrace the feedback and leverage it for performance improvement. By using the app people will have a tool to readily provide others with feedback on an ongoing basis, and feedback will not need to be associated with compensation, bonuses, and promotions.

People are most likely to change when they are motivated to change and when they believe that change is necessary. Therefore one important feature of the app is that individuals set their own growth goals. Users can broadcast their goals to their teammates and colleagues so that they can pull relevant feedback from others. They can also update their goals, set new goals, respond to feedback, ask questions, rate their progress, and receive progress ratings from others.

What first made you decide to develop this? What has the process been like?
I have been reflecting upon how to give and receive feedback more effectively for quite some time. I have engaged in dialogue with others about the topic and ideas and thoughts have been tumbling around in my head. A few months ago, I was talking about the app with a trusted colleague and friend who said, “Gail, just do it!” I could still hear her voice that afternoon when I was on the phone with a developer who developed software to be used for delivery of course materials for class role-plays and simulations. I was speaking with the developer about an upcoming course of mine because I planned to use his software. With the words of my colleague still echoing in my head, I shared my feedback app idea with him and he is now my business partner. Providing feedback effectively is an issue that I am passionate about because I believe that people want to grow, develop, and be the best “version” of themselves. As you may have heard, “If you’re not growing you’re dying,” and I think it is fair to say that most people prefer the former. Often, however, we do not have an accurate understanding of how we are perceived by others. The only way to gain insight into how others perceive us is if we receive feedback from them.

More generally, what advice do you have for people trying to be effective team leaders? What dynamic leads to the best team performance?
One of the keys to being an effective team leader is to build a culture of trust through transparent and candid communication. The feedback app fuels this behavior and creates a virtuous cycle of communication amongst team members. When team members experience a sense of psychological safety their team will have the potential to reach peak performance.

Professor Berger teaches ‘Leading Creative Teams’ for the MSLCE program.
Check back in the September for our fall speaker line-up!

LEARN MORE

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

Interested in applying?
The final deadline for fall 2016 is August 1, 2016. Applications for winter 2017 will be accepted through the fall.