



## **Student Investigates Business Opportunities in Disney World**

While many of her classmates were gearing up for the fall semester, Meghan Mangigian was boarding a plane for Orlando — not to escape, but to gain onsite business experience in Walt Disney World®.

Last winter, the Rowan College at Gloucester County (RCGC) business studies major began exploring the Disney College Program, an internship experience for college students. “It’s always been my dream to work for Disney, so I knew I had to apply,” said the Swedesboro resident.

After completing an application and web-based interview, Mangigian was accepted in March. By August she was on her way to a new adventure that will last more than four months.

From Disney’s variety of programs, Mangigian chose to pursue merchandising, logging 35 to 40 hours per week in Disney’s Animal Kingdom. After only a few months in the program, she has learned a lot about the theme park giant. “They have a good marketing plan,” she said. “I’ve been networking since I’ve been down here because I would love to stay with the company after I graduate and be able to work for them.”

“Meghan is getting the best exposure possible in that area for marketing, for advertising, for merchandising, for customer service — all of those skills that she’s trying to develop,” said Darlene Berger, RGC Cooperative Education program director. “The Walt Disney Company, known for developing and delivering unparalleled creative content, is the best place possible for Meghan to cultivate those talents.”

Mangigian will earn three credits for RCGC’s online Cooperative Education Work Experience course, while simultaneously taking Corporate Communication at the Disney Institute (Disney credits are not transferrable to RCGC). Enhancing her experience, she also attends assorted conferences and workshops. Disney provides housing for students at a fee, which is deducted from their weekly paychecks.

Mangigian’s Disney Institute professor shares her 20 years of knowledge and experience with the company with students in the program. “She has worked in hospitality management, retail management, and she’s really helping me define what I would like to do and how I would like to work for the company,” Mangigian said.

“I feel like I’ve gained a lot of knowledge about the business world,” she said. “It’s really opened my eyes to how a consumer makes purchases, how corporate communications work, and guest service and interaction skills. I love being able to communicate with guests and be able to make magical moments for them and their families.”

RCGC provided a solid foundation for the experience. “I’ve taken a lot of great courses at RCGC,” said Mangigian, who plans to continue her education at Rowan University after completing her studies at RCGC in fall 2015. “I loved my marketing course, and I’ve known I wanted to go into marketing since high school.”

In addition, the RCGC Cooperative Education Work Experience course coaches interns on valuable business soft skills, covering topics such as interviewing skills, public speaking, business letter writing, and sexual harassment, business ethics, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws, Berger said.

Based on Mangigian’s experience, Berger encourages other students to apply for the Disney program.

“From what I have witnessed, the Disney College Program is extremely well structured and provides business students with a unique work experience rarely offered to college students,” Berger said.

“Working in a new environment away from home is a growing experience in and of itself,” she continued. In addition, students develop all-important professional skills, as they do in any internship. “When students who participate in Cooperative Education graduate from college, they will have a distinct advantage over those with a degree and no work experience,” she said.

Does Mangigian have advice for other RCGC students who may be considering the Disney College Program?

“I would tell them to definitely go for it,” she said. “Disney is a great place to work. It’s a great place to expand your horizons of what you would like to do with your degree,” she said.

Disney is also an eye-catching resume entry. “My managers have told me it is going to open many doors for me,” Mangigian said. “It’s a great opportunity.”

###