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An Academic Detour to the Big Apple

May 5, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – While many students choose to remain on campus during their tenure at Illinois Wesleyan, some students opt to spend a semester outside of the traditional classroom. Kamaya Thompson, a junior theater arts and English double major, chose to do just that. This past semester Thompson traveled New York City and participated in the New York Media Experience Program. She is the second IWU student to take part in the program.



Kamaya Thompson '12 operating a camera with the help of an instructor.

Thompson knew right away that she wanted an out-of state internship in media, but was uncertain how to proceed. She turned to the staff at the IWU Hart Career Center for help. There, Thompson read through one program description after another until she came upon the New York Media Experience Program through Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. The program allows undergraduate students to gain work experience with a major media organization in New York City while completing online courses. “This program just leaped off the page screaming pick me,” said Thompson, “so I did.”

The New York Media Experience Program staff assisted Thompson in finding temporary residence in New York City and selecting her online courses, however, Thompson was responsible for securing her internship position. Now residing in the media capital of the world, Thompson had a variety of organizations to choose from, such as television shows and public relations firms. Interested mainly in broadcasting and television, she found her ideal internship at NYC Media, a television network produced through the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment. “The sole purpose [of NYC Media] is to keep viewers updated with events going on in the city,” said Thompson, “we also produced shows like *Eat Out Time Out* and *Free in NYC* which let viewers know about restaurants in the city and free activities.”



Thompson with former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and producers from NYC Media.

From copying papers and filing tapes to transcribing scripts and setting up cameras on a shoot, Thompson was responsible for a variety of tasks at NYC Media. “A typical day for me was doing anything and everything,” said Thompson, “there was no such thing as a task too big or too small.” Thompson even found herself running errands and answering phones. While some days were more exciting than others, Thompson’s favorite day at her internship was when she worked on a segment with former Mayor Rudy Giuliani. “It was a great feeling being in a room with a honorary politician,” said Thompson, who assisted with cameras, lights and photography during the shoot. “I was the token photographer that day and had my moment of being paparazzi,” she said “I even had the opportunity to step in

front of the camera and take a picture with Giuliani.”

In addition to her hectic internship duties, Thompson completed two media-related academic courses. “Although I am not in a classroom, my typical school day involves me completing online forums during the week and writing essays on the weekends,” said Thompson. Although busy with her internship and schoolwork, Thompson found the time to enjoy the

culture and amenities that New York City has to offer, such as seeing a Tony award-winning musical comedy, *Avenue Q*, and make friends with people from all over the world, including Poland and France.

Thompson credits Illinois Wesleyan for not only introducing her to the remarkable experience, but also for preparing her for the program. "As an IWU student I learned the importance of time management and gained invaluable knowledge while working with Tom Quinn [IWU assistant professor of theater arts and acting liaison] on his independent film *Using*," said Thompson.

Thompson looks forward to returning to campus next fall, but is thankful for pursuing an alternate route to graduation. "I came to New York uncertain of what role I wanted to play in the broadcasting industry. Now I am leaving the city knowing that I want to work in the electronic news gathering department," said Thompson, "I finally have a sense of self and it feels amazing to know who I am."

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