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Kim Hill

*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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## Former Intern ‘Pays it Forward’ for Current Student

Aug. 6, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— When Annie Tillmann ’12 needed an intern, she knew just who to call.

The Illinois Wesleyan alumna who had held multiple internships in her student days contacted the **Hart Career Center** to promote an opportunity with her employer, the Midland County (Texas) Public Libraries. One of the library’s locations includes space for large-scale exhibits designed to bring thousands of visitors who may not otherwise visit to the library.

The library’s “blockbuster” exhibit this year was the North American debut of *Permian Monsters: Life before the Dinosaurs*. As exhibits and learning experiences coordinator, Tillmann knew she needed help to create multi-generational programming and resources and to properly staff the exhibit, which included fossilized skeletons and full-scale, fleshed animatronic models of animals of the Permian geologic period.



Lauren Kiesewetter ’16 (left) interned with the Midland County (Texas) Public Libraries, thanks to Annie Tillman ’12.

“I owe my internship success to the interdisciplinary nature of Illinois Wesleyan and how it allowed me to capitalize on not just one of my interests, but all of them,” said Tillmann, who designed her own interdisciplinary major in **educational studies** and also majored in **art**. “I was able to pursue my passions equally. It’s a place where I could not only combine the things I love and keep learning, but also have the opportunity to pay it forward.

“I knew the quality and work ethic of IWU students and that prevalent underlying passion for what we do,” Tillmann added. “Given the nature of this project, I needed someone adaptable, resourceful and quick on his or her feet.”

**Anthropology** and **Hispanic Studies** double major Lauren Kiesewetter ’16 (Yorkville, Ill.) learned about the paid internship through the Hart Career Center. Her responsibilities included writing field trip guides for teachers and school groups, writing facilitator guidelines for educational programs relating to the exhibit, and giving tours of the Permian Monsters exhibit. The field trips were successful; Tillmann reported more than 1,000 children from six school districts came to the exhibit on field trips during May. In addition, Kiesewetter helped create the contents for children’s backpacks available for check out. Her Spanish-speaking skills were an important factor in her successful application for the position. “The Midland community has a large bilingual population, and my translation skills helped the educational experience of many community members,” she said.

Kiesewetter said the most rewarding experience of her internship was watching kids check out the backpacks and do the activities inside with their parents or each other to learn more about fossils or geology. “Seeing them laugh and learn about fossils or geology right before my eyes is the most amazing feeling in the world,” she said. “We helped to create a love of lifelong learning. For me, there is nothing more rewarding.”

She said the internship has helped her narrow her career focus. “I knew I wanted to work in a museum, but after this internship, I know I want to be an educational director or curator and help to further the educational experience of every single patron who works through the door,” Kiesewetter said.

“One of the reasons I love museums so much is that education becomes associated with fun, adventure and community,” she added. “I can go into a museum and get completely lost in the experience. The excitement of the past and history come to life. I want to encourage this learning for everyone who comes into a museum, and my internship helped me realize this.”

Tillmann said she experienced similar revelations in her internship experiences. “I had several internships while I was a student that really helped me figure out what I wanted to do, and what I didn’t want to do, as I moved forward with my career,” said Tillmann, who interned at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago and at the Eric Carle Museum of

Picture Book Art in Massachusetts. “My mentors at those institutions made a tremendous impact on me both professionally and personally. I wanted to be able to offer someone else similar guidance in their path to success.”

Tillmann said Kieseewetter made an impression on library patrons in the way she approached the exhibit’s material and in her teaching roles. “She embodied exactly what I was looking for in this assistant role and that’s why I reached out to IWU,” said Tillmann, who noted Kieseewetter was the only undergraduate hired to work on the Permian exhibit, which broke attendance records and has been extended through August due to popular demand. “She has a bright future ahead of her.”