

Disney Opens Doors For Theme Park Designers of Tomorrow With Walt Disney Imagineering's 19th ImagiNations Competition

April 26, 2010 -- Glendale, CA – Four students from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign will have the experience of a lifetime when they are granted the opportunity to visit Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale for two weeks (June 8 to 16) as finalists in Walt Disney Imagineering's 19th ImagiNations design competition. The students will have the opportunity to complete their projects, make professional presentations to the judging panel, interview for internships and participate in a competition. The Award Ceremony will take place June 16, 2010.

ImagiNations is a program designed and sponsored by Walt Disney Imagineering, the creative arm of all Disney Parks and Resorts worldwide, to encourage students and professionals from a diverse array of backgrounds and skills to consider careers in creative and technical fields including digital arts, engineering, and next-generation interactivity.

The competition gives participants a way to showcase their talents and gain practical knowledge in design, with the opportunity to earn internships. While a position at Walt Disney Imagineering is often found on surveys of "dream occupations," the company uses ImagiNations as a way to reach out to the widest possible talent pool for its future.

Teams demonstrate their creative, technical, artistic, and business skills by designing a ride, attraction, hotel, or a land within an existing Disney theme park or resort. Projects can also be the creation of an entirely new experience – a theme park, resort, themed restaurant, or something completely unique. Participants work for several months on their concepts and presentations, which are evaluated by a team of Imagineers in California, Paris and Florida. The projects and concepts presented are not intended to be built by Disney – they are a way for the entrants to demonstrate their skill and creative abilities. In consideration for the opportunities provided by Imagineering, submissions become the sole property of Walt Disney Imagineering and Imagineering retains all rights to use and/or display the submissions and the materials contained in them.

During their two weeks at Imagineering, the six finalist teams meet and network with the technical and creative Imagineers responsible for Disney's global theme parks and attractions located in California, Florida, Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong. The Imagineers are also responsible for the cruise ships of the Disney Cruise Line, Castaway Cay, Disney's private island in the Bahamas, and a resort hotel and vacation club currently being built on the island of Oahu in Hawaii.

The team from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is comprised of **Brent Dirks** [computer engineering], **Marchelle Gant** [Architecture], **Samantha Juna** [Industrial Design], and **John Weiser** [Architecture] and advised by Architectural Design Instructor **Matthew Niermann** [Architecture]. Their project is entitled *TRON: Gridlock*. In this Tomorrowland attraction inspired by Disney's "Tron," guests are invited through the doors of Innotron Industries, to be among the first to try their new interactive gaming technology, "Project Gridlock." While waiting, guests are introduced to the history of Innotron, including the company's supercomputer, the ICU, or "Integrated Computing Unit." As guests enter the Gridlock testing rooms and take a seat to play, the ICU takes control of the Gridlock program. The test room plunges into chaos as the ICU digitizes the guests and takes them prisoners within the computer. With the help of an ally computer program called FLN, guests then embark on a high-speed mission through TRON city in a special escape vehicle, the Light Shuttle. Although the Light Shuttle is split in two by an enemy vehicle, guests are ultimately de-digitized to the real world.

Imagineers are famous for telling stories through three-dimensional attractions and experiences. The judges are looking in particular for the ability of technology, architecture, costumes, transportation, and attractions to support the story – and participants are advised to "begin with a great story before developing anything else."

The judges apply the same criteria to the entries as they would to their own work – reviewing whether the concept is appealing, exciting, relevant and well researched; whether it provides an engaging guest experience; the technical and creative innovation; the quality of the presentation; and the ability of the attraction to demonstrate respect and inclusion for the diverse array of families who visit Walt Disney Parks & Resorts all over the world. ‘

The other teams of finalists represent Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Eastern Michigan University, The University of Arizona, Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. (Some of these teams are made up of students from different colleges and universities.)

Submissions can be made as artwork, illustrations, visuals, building designs (floor plans or elevations), storyboards, developed story treatments (models), computer graphics, and/or video.

Participants learn about the competition from academic groups, professional organizations and Imagineering recruiting teams who visit schools. Entrants must be a student with Junior, Senior or Full-time Graduate student standing; or a recent graduate within 1 year of graduation, and be sponsored by a college or university with a declared major or minor in one of these disciplines; or sponsored by a certified 501(c)3 Creative Arts Organization or Association whose focus is one of these disciplines: Architecture, Digital Art /Animation, Interior Design, Theater Design, Construction Management, Engineering, Project Management, Creative Writing, Fine Art, or Media Production / Interactive.

Walt Disney Imagineering

Walt Disney Imagineering is the unique innovative organization that creates -- from concept through construction – all Disney theme parks, resorts, attractions, cruise ships, real estate developments, and regional entertainment venues worldwide. The name Imagineering combines imagination with engineering.

Imagineering’s unique strength comes from the teamwork and syntheses of creative and technical professionals representing more than 140 diverse disciplines including artists, architects, engineers, writers, machinists, landscape designers, model makers, sound technicians, carpenters, producers, accountants, filmmakers, schedulers, estimators and more.

More Information about the ImagiNations competition can be found at <http://disney.go.com/disneycareers/imaginations/>.