

My Phenomenal IIDA Mentoring Program Experience

My day began when my mentor, Amie Keener, welcomed me to Gensler and gave me a tour of their new offices and workspaces. The tour was a rich learning experience, illustrating how state-of-the-art design can transform a 1950's historic, landmark building into a contemporary, productive, and healthy environment. As we walked through the workspaces, it was inspiring to see my school work coming to life! I observed a sketch of a corporate lobby perspective on a white board, a section of a complex furniture piece on a computer, and a colorful collage composed of photographs, drawings and diagrams, (the outcome of a charette), displayed on a wall. The creative, collaborative and cerebral vibe that I felt at Gensler felt exhilarating, and it reinforced my passion to pursue a career in commercial interior design.

During the morning, we worked on one of Amie's current projects to design a large corporate headquarters. Amie enhanced my understanding of how a designer translates the needs of her clients into carefully planned spaces and thoughtful material selections. Later in the morning, Amie shared her career path and taught me another important lesson: take risks and volunteer for assignments - that's what Amie did, and it ultimately led to her remarkable success. Her wise guidance reminded me of the saying "opportunity dances with those on the dance floor." Amie taught me that career success will come to students who "get out on the dance floor," by attending professional meetings, volunteering for professional or organizational assignments, networking, and participating in programs like the IIDA Student Mentoring Program.

Another way my mentor helped me to envision my career path and understand more about commercial interior design was to introduce me to other experienced professionals. After my morning filled with learning experiences at Gensler, we drove to the Steelcase Worklife Center where Amie introduced me to some of her colleagues. Amie thought that I would appreciate learning from the professionals at Steelcase because when I initially contacted her, I shared that I was curious about a career in which I could conduct behavioral and psychological research to improve interior designs and products used in the interior design industry. At Steelcase, an interior designer, an industrial engineer and an organizational consultant shared their career paths and some of their work experiences with me, and they presented some interesting case studies in which behavioral sciences research led to product and design innovations. The meetings at Steelcase were fascinating, and they helped me to crystallize my career path.

I am so grateful to the IIDA Mentoring Program for introducing me to an outstanding mentor. I was truly inspired by my mentor and all the design professionals I met today. I augmented my knowledge of interior design, learned ways to successfully grow my career, and clarified my career direction. I ended the day feeling inspired and very excited to be starting a career in commercial interior design.