Leone Twins Enjoy Magical Co-op Rotations

Every college experience is different. There are very few that involve attending the same college as your twin brother. There are probably even fewer that involve working co-op rotations for Walt Disney World or in Las Vegas, which makes the Leone twins’ college experience even more unique.

Sean and Joseph Leone are both industrial engineering majors who will graduate from the University of Pittsburgh this December. They are from Bushkill, Pa., and chose Pitt after they decided to follow in their sister’s footsteps.

“My older sister went to Pitt for accounting, so when we visited the campus with her, we fell in love,” Joe says. “It had the perfect combination of big city and college campus feel.”

The Leone twins, who were roommates their freshman year and then RA’s for the last three, both decided to participate in the co-op program through the Swanson School of Engineering. Joe landed at General Electric, while Sean was off to Disney World and then Disneyland on his third rotation.

“When applying to co-ops, I was blinded by the mind-set of only working for an industrial company. Large machinery, greasy tools, production lines—you know, your typical engineering co-op,” Sean says. “I never realized I could be working for a company that is built on princes, princesses, and magic that all started with a mouse!”

While Sean was busy bringing more magic to the “happiest place on earth,” Joe was getting a feel for different business aspects at GE, first as a manufacturing and processing engineer co-op, then a lean analyst, and lastly as a quality technician. Joe’s co-op with GE gave him the opportunity to work not only in different departments but in different locations as well. He was in GE Transportation’s manufacturing headquarters in Erie, Pa. first, then at a global distribution center outside Chicago, Ill., and at one of GE’s remanufacturing facilities in Las Vegas on his last rotation.

“I could not have asked for a better co-op experience,” Joe says. “The places I was able to travel, the people I met, and the projects I completed will be memories I will cherish for a very long time.”

Joe says that his favorite part of his co-op experience was getting the chance to travel to new places and meet many new people. The thing Sean enjoyed most was something a little more personal.

“I would definitely say my favorite part was seeing the changes I made that influenced guests’ experiences in the parks. Walking through Cinderella’s Castle in the Magic Kingdom and being able to witness the happiness firsthand was truly something unbelievable,” Sean says.

They both agree that joining the co-op program was important and there was one main reason why: experience.

“Choosing to participate in the co-op was a no-brainer. The opportunity to
receive more than a years’ worth of real work experience before I even graduated was something I did not want to miss out on,” Joe says. “I wanted to get out into the real world of engineering. Classes and labs were always undeniably beneficial to my growth, but nothing compares to the experience you gain from working full time,” Sean says. Both Joe and Sean would recommend participating in the co-op program to future students because they believe that it has already helped their future careers, not to mention their wallets. Joe says that having a co-op job helped him not only to pay some tuition and other college expenses, but it also funded multiple backpacking adventures across Europe and the United States. “I have already started to apply for full-time jobs after I graduate this December, and I can 100 percent say that my co-op experiences are the most valuable aspects of my résumé,” Sean says. “The majority of my interviews are spent discussing my time with Disney.” I highly recommend that every engineering student participate in the co-op program, as it gives you a small but significant glimpse of the type of work you can potentially be completing in the future,” Joe says. “The knowledge you gain is immersurable; you learn so much more on the job than you do in the classroom.” As far as attending college with their twin brother, they both agreed that they wouldn’t have it any other way. “We have created the best memories together at Pitt, and it’s a blessing to be a twin at school,” Sean says. “Our University experience has been incredible, and I think being a twin made it even better,” Joe says. My mom always said, “Two heads are better than one!”

New Faces in the Co-op Department

All of us in the co-op office are eager to begin this year. We have many loyal and committed employer partners returning to work with us yet again, and we have many new participants who are as excited to work with us as we are to work with them. Not only that, but we have streamlined some of our processes and truly hope that helps to save time for anyone who needs to complete a form for review for us! Lastly, we have two new faces in the office. Hannah Gayer is our new graduate intern, and Tyler Kimmel is our program administrator. We know you will enjoy working with both of them. Tyler will make sure that the office is running smoothly and effectively in an array of ways. He assists with preparation for the Co-op Job Fair, the Recognition Dinner, our annual report, and newsletters. He also helps students with résumés and co-op paperwork and questions. Hannah is currently in her first year in the Higher Education Management Program as a graduate student. She will assist students with résumés, cover letters, and other co-op questions. She also has led the way in preparation for our mock interview event for co-op students. We are excited to have both Tyler and Hannah as a part of our co-op office. We know that they will help us to continue to provide excellent service to our students and will help the co-op program continue to thrive.

Former Co-op Hahn Launches Kickstarter Campaign

Creating an inexpensive razor that is customizable to your specific skin type was Adam Hahn’s objective. He has accomplished this goal, in the form of the Leaf Razor, thanks to the help of his business partner, Adam Simon, and thousands of backers on Kickstarter. And Hahn got his start right here in the Swanson School of Engineering co-op department at the University of Pittsburgh. Hahn was a mechanical engineering major at Pitt and graduated with his bachelor’s degree in 2000 and master’s degree in 2002. Hahn also participated in the Swanson School’s co-op program with Medrad, where he got his first taste of real engineering experience. “Before I went to work at Medrad, I didn’t really know what engineers did all day at real positions,” Hahn says. “Medrad taught me what it’s like to work in a real research development environment and how real products come to market.” It was Hahn’s engineering background that helped him form a solution to a problem that he was having: getting a good, clean shave. That led him and Simon to launch a Kickstarter campaign to help fund the Leaf Razor. His new idea was to create a hybrid razor from the two current types of razors on the market: a modern cartridge razor and a double edge razor. He wanted to combine the multiblade pivoting head of the cartridge razor with the inexpensiveness of using double-edge blades, with some new features as well. “Not only can you bring the ongoing cost of shaving to almost nothing with our razor, we also designed some new features that let you customize it to your specific skin type. This is something that’s new to the market, and we think you will really resonate with people like that who have had trouble getting a good shave,” Hahn says. “You can load up to three blades in the Leaf Razor, and each position has a different level of blade exposure, which is directly related to skin irritation. So, depending on where and how many blades you load, you can customize the shave to minimize irritation and maximize closeness.” Leaf Razor hit its goal of raising $100,000 on Kickstarter courtesy of their 1,407 backers, raising $115,328. Pittsburgh, Hahn’s hometown, led the way with 53 backers. They had support from all over the world, including in Singapore, Sweden, and Canada. The preorders are expected to ship in late spring 2017. Hahn says that he recommends participating in a co-op to current students for a plethora of reasons, the main ones being experience and networking. These are two things that he looks for when hiring himself. “Aside from all the invaluable skills you learn, it provides direct experience that is so important to have in a job search. As a manager who hires engineers, a co-op really stands out on a résumé for me,” Hahn says. “You also will develop relationships that you can use for the rest of your career. I still talk to people from Medrad to this day. It’s surprising how often you will run into the same people throughout your career, so the more people you know in the industry, the better.” One of the things that Hahn liked best about his co-op experience was how he was able to take the knowledge that he had learned in the classroom and apply it to real projects in the workplace. “It’s the best way to see what being an engineer is really like and the differences between theory and real life. My co-op really bridged the gap between the concepts you learn in school and how to actually design things in the real world. This is such an important part of being an engineer, and I feel the sooner you are exposed to it, the better,” Hahn says. Leaf Razor is still taking preorders for the spring of 2017 at indiegogo.com/projects/upgrade-your-shave-with-the-leaf-razor#. The successful launch of the company comes in part from Hahn’s own success, which stemmed from participating in the co-op program while at Pitt. He believes that it gave him the upper hand when he first began his career in the engineering field. “Having a successful co-op is like having a head start in a race. It puts you in a position to hit the ground running in any company, and that is something that hiring managers look for,” Hahn says. “I would say that my co-op experience was almost as valuable as my education.”
Nominations Open for Co-op Student of the Year and Employer of the Year

The co-op program is fortunate to have smart, capable students and strong employer partners. The Co-op Student of the Year and Co-op Employer of the Year awards recognize the time, effort, and hard work the parties have contributed. This is the time of year to think about those outstanding companies and individuals and to submit nominations for the 2016 awards.

The criteria for Co-op Student of the Year are as follows:

1. Excellent academic record
2. Outstanding work contributions with co-op employer (students must have three rotations completed)
3. Volunteerism or contributions to the co-op or University of Pittsburgh community

Ideally, we would like to have one nominee from each department. The University of Pittsburgh can select one candidate to represent it in the National Co-op Student of the Year competition, which is sponsored by the Cooperative Education Division of the American Society for Engineering Education. The winner will be flown to the annual conference, this year to be held in Jacksonville, Fla., in February 2017, to receive this recognition along with a plaque and a $1,000 award.

Pitt has held three national Co-op Student of the Year awards and one national Intern of the Year Award in 2014. We have had many outstanding finalists as well.

The criteria for Co-op Employer of the Year are as follows:

1. Sustained commitment to cooperative education at the University of Pittsburgh
2. Quality of projects and assignments

The Co-op Employer of the Year and all Pitt Co-op Student of the Year nominees will be honored at our annual recognition dinner, scheduled for Friday, December 9, 2016, at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum.

We look forward to accepting your nominations. Please submit your nomination by Friday, October 14 to Maureen Barcic at paub2m@pitt.edu. Feel free to contact her with any questions pertaining to the nomination process.

““I had an extraordinary first rotation with Tindall during the fall semester. This second rotation has proved to be just as wonderful a learning experience. I have been exposed to more work opportunities, and the people here continue to help me thrive.””

Mckenzie Kallquist
Tindall Corporation

““I am very satisfied with my assignment. I feel like a member of the team, and the engineers on my team(s) remind me of the importance of my work on a regular basis. I have been able to do just about everything I had hoped to during my co-op rotations. Everyone has been very helpful.””

Ken Pechtl
Philips

Dates to Remember

Co-op Mock Interviews Event
Tuesday, September 13, 2016
William Pitt Union Ballroom
12:30–3 p.m.

Employer Panel Event
Tuesday, September 20, 2016
157 Benedum Hall
7–9 p.m.

Annual Fall Co-op Job Fair
Tuesday, September 27, 2016
William Pitt Union
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Nomination Deadline for Co-op Student of the Year
Friday, October 14, 2016
Contact Maureen at paub2m@pitt.edu.

Co-op Recognition Dinner*
Friday, December 9, 2016
Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum
*for students who have completed their rotations

Annual Spring Co-op Job Fair
Thursday, January 26, 2017
William Pitt Union
10 a.m.–2 p.m.