

Innovation One teams with 1965 alumnus

Partnership yields product redesign, on-campus manufacturing

By Catherine E. Porter
marketing and communication '16

A number of Trine University students are pursuing experiential learning opportunities through the aid of the Lilly fund. For one student, it developed into a chance to operate a start-up business.



Nathaniel Scroggins, a senior design engineering technology major from Hanover, Ind. is a Lilly intern who works for Innovation One (i1) on Trine University's main campus. In summer 2015, one of Scroggins' major projects involved redesigning the product of a New York-based company owned by 1965 Tri-State alumnus Nick Santino.

"I visited Innovation One last year and asked for help," Santino said of the partnership. He did not know at the time the student assigned to the project would be fellow Alpha Sigma Phi brother Scroggins.

Santino's Swimming Reaction Lights are colored light tubes designed to improve the overall quality of competitive swimming, especially for deaf swimmers. Scroggins' redesign improves the aesthetics and functionality of the product while drastically cutting the cost of production. Production of the lights has been moved to Trine from Newark, N.Y., and Scroggins has

assumed responsibility for operating the start-up business. The first batch of lights was shipped from Trine in fall 2015.

"These bright LED lights are awesome. They're great for officials, swimmers, fans and media to see lights in action, following both referees and starters at their commands by pressing buttons," said Doug Matchett, World Deaf Swimming Championships meet director, USA Deaf Swimming director and USA Swimming national official. "I've had the opportunity to operate the lights system and it's surprisingly simple and very easy to use. I look forward to seeing these lights in action soon."

Scroggins' redesigned Swimming Reaction Lights have garnered praise from swimmers as well. Andrew McEwen, a junior swimmer at Palmyra-Macedon High School of New York state said they were "great, very clear signals and very easy to use."

According to Scroggins, being a Lilly intern has not only given him the opportunity to work with an alumnus, but it has allowed him to get his foot in the door at many area companies and gain more resume-worthy experience. Aside from the Swimming Reaction Lights redesign, Scroggins' other summer responsibilities included "designing products, creating test fixtures for companies and doing computer-aided design work for Trine or outside companies."

Scroggins is one of many students to benefit from the Lilly grant. When the Lilly fund program was introduced at Trine in November 2013, eight students took part. That number increased to 48 during the first official year of the program starting June 2014. For summer and fall 2015, there were 34 internships made possible by the Lilly grant.

The program facilitates these opportunities by assisting students with the expenses associated with summer internships, including housing, travel, food, books and supplies. It was made possible by a grant from the Lilly Endowment,

Inc., of Indianapolis, and will run at Trine for three years.

"The Lilly fund has opened opportunities to have internships on campus during the academic year and has allowed students who would typically have an unpaid internship to be able to afford an internship," said Jason Blume, executive director of i1.

Lilly allocation recipients last summer included Lauren Verkamp, a junior from Franklin, Ind. majoring in marketing; Brendan Haile, a junior from Indianapolis, Ind. majoring in criminal justice and psychology; and Valerie Olivo, a School of Professional Studies student from Fort Wayne, Ind. majoring in communication. Verkamp served an internship with College Mentors for Kids, a nonprofit organization in Indianapolis that connects college students with at-risk and low income elementary-age children. Haile worked with the Marion County Sheriff's Office and Olivo acted as a communication specialist for a start-up company, Mary Jane Luxury Robes.

"The Lilly fund allowed me to have an internship that is nonpaid but still focuses on my major and is something I am passionate about," Verkamp said. Olivo agreed, saying her internship was "an amazing opportunity and the Lilly fund made it possible."

Megan Verkamp, a marketing junior from Franklin, Ind. is also an i1 intern for the school year. She is responsible for promoting the Innovation Challenge offered by i1 and sponsored by Fifth Third Bank.

Bryce Hina, a biomedical and electrical engineering junior from Zanesville, Ohio, served a summer internship alongside Scroggins at i1. Both students remain as interns for the 2015-16 academic year.

For more information on the Lilly fund, visit trine.edu/innovation-one/allowance.

For additional information about Innovation One, visit trine.edu/innovation-one/. ■