



# Counselor starts as intern, stays 16 years



Mayank Dhungana/Index

Joe Hamilton, assistant director of University Counseling Services, said he makes his impact subtly by seeing one student at a time for 15 years.

## Hamilton aids campus since start of University Counseling Center

BY ALEX BOLES  
Assistant Features Editor

Joe Hamilton, assistant director of University Counseling Services, has learned to call Kirksville home.

Hamilton was born and raised in Osceola, Iowa, a small town of about 4,000 people. He said his childhood was typical — he played on the outskirts of town with his friends and did normal kid stuff.

“I definitely was not one of the country kids because we didn’t live on a farm or anything like that,” he said. “In the summertime, [I would be] outside playing with my friends and riding my bikes and building forts and stuff. We used to play on the railroad tracks all the time, which seems funny. I would never let my children play on the railroad tracks now.”

Hamilton is the youngest of three children, and his parents expected him to be more mature when growing up, he said. He was seen as the shy, intelligent, artsy kid in school and even performed in a few plays, he said.

“I was definitely not an athlete,” he said. “I was in band, and cho-

rus and drama. That was definitely more of my emphasis, that kind of area. I was, you know, one of the smart kids.”

Hamilton entered college with a major on the opposite end of the spectrum from where he is today.

“I don’t know if it’s what I wanted to be when I grew up, but when I first went to college, I majored in chemical engineering,” Hamilton said. “In school, I was good at math and science and that sort of thing, and I always just did what was expected, in a way.”

He said college was the first time he was able to really explore what he wanted to be instead of following a path that was chosen for him. After only one semester as a chemical engineering major, he knew that it was a mistake, he said. He then went into an undeclared major and took a handful of classes that eventually helped him decide to become a

counselor, he said.

“My first semester of college was really awful,” Hamilton said. “It was like I lost my identity in a lot of ways, and just so much [had] changed, and for the first time I wasn’t the best student.”

He said that after he graduated from Iowa State, he received a graduate assistantship from Truman and, like many students, came here because of the money.

“I probably would have never thought at the time that I’d still be in Kirksville this many years later,” Hamilton said. “I’ve definitely grown to love it. It’s my home.”

Hamilton said he has worked for the counseling services since it opened 16 years ago. He said he started as an intern and was hired when there was a job opening. He is now the adviser for Students Together Educating Peers, which is best known for its CHOICES program during Truman Week. He said the group emphasizes safety procedures that deal with sexual assault and diversity awareness.

Hamilton said he sees himself as helping a little at a time and that over time, it will add up to be a bigger change. He said the community itself has changed a lot since he first came here and that he would like to believe he had some part in that.

“We see ourselves as wanting to be part of the entire community,” he said.

Hamilton said he likes being able to make a difference in people’s lives and that the ability to make a subtle impact makes his work at counseling services rewarding. He sees about 30 students a week, sometimes in groups, and the students keep him busy, he said.

“I like being able to help people and make a change,” he said. “I am helping one person at a time.”

Hamilton said Truman schools great students, and he tries to relay a genuine quality to his students by being real with people.

“This is who I am,” Hamilton said.

# Disney grants wishes for real-world experience

## Disney Program offers students opportunity for college credit

BY STEPHANIE HALL  
Staff Reporter

At Disney World, a young boy takes a few tentative steps, leaving his walker behind and fulfilling his wish of walking to Mickey Mouse before he returns home to be confined to a wheelchair.

This is the type of priceless moment that graduate student Jessi Berger and many other students who participate in the Disney College Program have witnessed.

The Disney College Program gives students the opportunity to network with Disney executives and participate in personal and career development classes while earning college credit, according to a February press release from Disney.

Berger is working toward her MAE, has participated in the Disney College Program three times and now runs the E-presentation at Truman.

“I saw the info table while I was walking and attended the presentation that night, and the rest was history,” Berger said.

Berger said the first time she worked at Disney World, she operated the rides in Fantasy Land, and the other two times, she performed in shows and parades.

“[The jobs] tend to be the frontline work,” Berger said.

“They have different professional development series that you can do that are geared toward specific majors.”

A business major might work in a merchandise role, a theatre major might work in the costume department or be a performer and an exercise science major might work in recreation, Berger said.

“[The Disney College Program] does have courses that are accredited by the American Counsel on Education,” Berger said. “There are three new ones including corporate communication, hospitality management and creativity and innovation.”

There are also exploration series on hospitality, leadership and human resources.”

Berger said her experience with Disney created lasting ties.

“I’m in contact with my friends from Disney every day,” Berger said. “We’re a crazy bunch, but a lot of people say once you go down there, you never lose contact with the people you made friends with. It’s a pretty special bond.”

**Jessi Berger**  
Graduate Student

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Sophomore Cherish Varley, a theatre major, said that until now, she hasn’t seen that many internships for her major. She said she will attend the E-presentation to see if the program is something she would be interested in.

“There are concerns I have,” Varley said. “I have heard that a lot of times people end up flipping burgers when they work



Mark Hardy/Index

Graduate student Jessi Berger speaks in the Student Union Building to students about her experience with the Disney College Program on the afternoon of Feb. 18. Recruiters like Berger work for Disney nationwide.

for the mouse.”

Varley said she would be interested in working on stage production, performing in the Magic Kingdom or Cinderella’s Palace.

“I also heard that if you go in the fall, there are more opportunities than in the spring because there are more performances around Christmas,” Varley said.

Senior Abigail Burns joined the Disney College Program during the spring semester of her sophomore year.

“I was a ride operator,” Burns said. “There were a bunch of different positions on the rotation — probably 12 or 14 in which you sent cars or help unload.

You work about 45 minutes per ride, and there are three different rides in Fantasy Land.”

She said the work was not difficult, but the experience was priceless. One of her favorite aspects of her job was getting to work with the Make-a-Wish children who received off-site treatment and got to visit the park when they were not in treatment, she said. Burns said they provided special benefits for Make-a-Wish families.

These benefits can be as simple as taking a family to the front of a line for a ride or replacing snacks or merchandise.

“There are No Strings At-

tached cards, which is basically a little form you can fill out, kind of like a gift certificate,” Burns said. “If a kid’s ice cream falls on to the floor or someone spills their popcorn, you can fill out one and take it to any store for a replacement.”

Burns said the program teaches workers that little things make a big difference to people.

Diversity was another important aspect of the program to Burns, who is an international studies major.

“Unlike going to school at Truman where everyone is from Missouri or the surrounding states, there is an international

program there, so I worked with people from Brazil, Argentina, Japan and China,” Burns said. “[I] worked with so many people, [that I learned] to read and react to people. Just so many things I wasn’t going to learn in school.”

To apply to the Disney College Program, students must visit an E-presentation on campus Feb. 28, March 5 or March 25.

Once selected, participants choose the roles in which they would be interested.

Job opportunities include attractions, costuming, culinary, entertainment, hospitality, life-guards and merchandise.

# TOTS2TEENS



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The Society of Professional Journalists is hosting speaker

# Eric Barton

Managing Editor from The Pitch newspaper in Kansas City

*Barton will talk about the differences between working at an alternative weekly versus a mainstream daily newspaper.*

Thursday, March 6 at 6 p.m. in the Truman Media Center, BH 1200