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News + Observer

Microsoft interns get perks, pay, play

Software giant cut nearly 5,000 jobs, but its interns are well cared for

By SHARON PIAN CHAN
THE SEATTLE TIMES

SEATTLE - The same day Microsoft reported some of its worst financial results, a dozen buses left the Redmond campus. During rush hour, they headed toward Highway 520 as a phalanx of cops on motorcycles shut down the on-ramps ahead, clearing the path to the Pacific Science Center.

Microsoft had rented the museum for a private party and a screening of the new "Harry Potter" movie. After the screening, about 600 attendees received free Xbox 360 video-game consoles.

The recipients of this VIP treatment? Microsoft's summer interns.

"You feel like royalty to be escorted by police," said Joriz De Guzman, 19, an intern working toward his master's degree in business administration at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

In a year when Microsoft cut nearly 5,000 jobs, the company continues to lavish money on its internship program, bringing about 1,000 college and graduate students from across the country to the Redmond campus for the summer.

The goal, the company says, is to recruit future employees and turn the interns into walking billboards back at school, chanting "Microsoft gave me



Microsoft exec Steven Sinofsky launches an intern's model rocket to commemorate the first moon landing.

MCT PHOTO BY STEVE RINGMAN

an Xbox" or "I went to a barbecue at Bill Gates' house."

Cultivating candidates

"We want to cultivate a pipeline of really, really strong employment candidates," said Kerry Olin, Microsoft's general manager for university recruiting. "Objective No. 2 is to create the kind of experience and window into Microsoft that sends them back — whether they get offers or not — as people who can be advocates for Microsoft."

The Gates barbecue, a tradi-

tion for many years, is gone now that he no longer works full time at Microsoft. Instead, CEO Steve Ballmer does a Q&A session with the interns, and pizza with MBA interns.

Olin said the company added the Pacific Science Center trip to replace the Gates party.

Last year, the U.N.-like motorcade ended at Woodland Park Zoo, where Ben Folds and Vampire Weekend gave a private concert. Free Zunes for everybody capped it off.

The summer of intern fun is not unusual at tech companies, which compete to hire

JUST A FEW OF THE PERKS

- Xbox console
- Housing stipend
- Competitive salary, estimated at \$4,600 to \$6,000 a month
- Relocation costs
- Mentors
- Sky diving
- Paragliding
- Private party at Pacific Science Center and screening of new "Harry Potter" movie
- "Intern Day of Caring," a day of volunteering
- Puzzle day, 8 hours of 1,000 Microsoft employees working on logic puzzles
- Mount Rainier hike
- Dinner at Farestart
- Seattle Mariners game

top college graduates. Google, which brings in hundreds of interns each year, puts interns into "cohorts," small groups that bond over weekly rock climbing and paintball outings. All the Google interns in Mountain View, Calif., went on a boat cruise.

Besides meeting with Ballmer, Microsoft interns attend presentations by division presidents. And Steven Sinofsky, president of the Windows division, hosted a model-rocket launch at a park with the Windows group interns to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing.

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