

At four years old, Molly Deptula told her mom that she would run away and join the circus... and then she did.

Today, Molly is a junior with a majoring in Multidisciplinary Engineering with a specialization in Entertainment Engineering Design, and a minor in Electronics and Systems. She describes herself as a storyteller with a love of learning. "At the heart of my work is a passion for tinkering, exploring machines and reimagining how we can use them in conjunction with traditional arts." After graduation her goal is a career in theatrical automation. She loves getting to spend her days creating mechanical magic. Through the MDE curriculum she takes classes in mechanical, civil, and electrical engineering to learn the theory and mathematics of the field. She will be able to apply these concepts in her design and technical theatre classes and projects with the Connecticut Repertory Theatre. The combination of theoretical and practical learning proved invaluable during her internship.



In March 2025, Molly was among a group of students who traveled to the US Institute of Theatre Technology Conference which was a whirlwind weekend of professional development. There, she spoke with many industry professionals, including the automation manager for Cirque du Soleil who later called her for an interview. Molly described

her interview as “a grueling forty-five minutes of technical questions and project reviews. I led with honest, earnest enthusiasm and hoped my work would speak for itself.” Her project experience, drive, and intellectual curiosity landed her a position as the automation intern for Cirque du Soleil.



After relocating for the summer to Las Vegas and being assigned to the show ‘O’, Molly literally jumped in with both feet. Her first task was a swim test, for which she received a rubber duck for passing. In addition to the chaos and wonder of a regular circus, *O* had the added complexity of being performed in and above 1.5 million gallons of water. Molly started her internship with daytime maintenance of the automation systems. The projects provided opportunities to practice her troubleshooting, fabrication, documentation, and organizational skills. “When machines broke, I was able to physically climb into and onto them to troubleshoot and learn how they all worked. It felt like the world’s craziest educational summer camp.”

Her next job involved show operations, shifting scenery. Molly trained under the world-class automation team at *O*. During show shifts, she split her time between the backstage and the operator’s booth. At the booth, she learned the control systems for the fluid effects, hydraulics, and electric mo-

tors that make *O* what it is. When backstage, she was involved with physical work while collaborating with artists, rigging, and carpentry departments. “It was a circus in every sense of the word. There was fire, aerial artists, acrobats, and technicians everywhere. They were all choreographed together to put on a show.” As part of the internship program, Molly



had the opportunity to visit all of Cirque du Soleil’s Las Vegas Resident shows. “All the shows are so different. It was so exciting to get to explore the different facets of the circus arts in Vegas.” KA is famous for its massive hydraulic systems (the longest cylinders in the world), while *MJ* is an electrical explosion of technical theatre. *Mystere* is “pure-joy” enhancing classic circus art with hydraulic and electric machines. *Blue Man Group* is professional shenanigans and organized chaos with smaller scale automation. Finally, *Mad Apple* provides a modern twist with novel technology

Looking back, Molly says she couldn’t have asked for a better summer. She urges students to seize any opportunities that come their way, saying “I went in thinking the worst they could say is no, come back next year, and I ended up



having the biggest adventure of my life.” Her advice to future students is to ask questions, join projects, and learn all you can. When combined with determination, optimism, and imagination, a childhood dream became a launching pad in this student’s career.