

From Home Furnishing Business

HPU Students Worked with Industry Leaders at HPMKT

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High Point University (<https://www.highpoint.edu/>) students learned more about their future profession as they worked alongside industry leaders from Oct. 14-18 at the High Point Market, one of the world's largest home furnishings trade shows.

The biannual event attracts thousands of buyers and manufacturers from across the globe who hire HPU business and interior design students to work in the various showrooms. The market provides students with experiential learning and opportunities to network with professionals from different industries.

"I have loved working at the market, and I know it will be very beneficial for me when I graduate," said Meghan West, a senior interior design major from Walpole, Massachusetts, who worked in the Hooker Furnishings showroom. "I have made great connections with some amazing companies and individuals. It has allowed me to see and experience what my future career will look like."

Hayley Bracci, a senior interior design major from Stow, Massachusetts, enjoyed working as a sales assistant and connecting with other HPU students at the SUNPAN furniture showroom.

“Through my High Point Market experience, I have been able to supplement my interior design knowledge with a bit of sales and supply chain knowledge, making it easier to understand how lead times work and how long it might take to receive ordered pieces once I become a practicing designer,” said Bracci.

“In addition, the market serves as a great way to see what furnishings, materials and other pieces companies offer, and allows for students to make connections with the interior design and sales industries.”

HPU students who work at the High Point Market gain extra income as well as networking skills, said Lilly Wingate, a 2017 nonprofit leadership and management graduate from Bainbridge Island, Washington. She has continued to work during markets at the SUNPAN showroom.

“They meet people from all over the world and from different parts of the industry,” said Wingate. “It’s just great to meet people and be involved in what makes High Point. You see the city come alive twice a year, and it’s fun to be part of what’s going on. It gives students a good chance to experience something outside of campus. I love working with them.”

Kari Lambert, a senior interior design major from Stillwater, Minnesota, worked at the Century Furniture showroom for the second time in the past year.

“The High Point Furniture Market has been an amazing experience as it has allowed me to meet and connect with so many interior designers, even some from my hometown in Minnesota,” said Lambert.

“While working at Century Furniture, I am often in the fabric selection room. This has allowed me amazing insights on current styles, patterns and colors. I believe that this has given me a leg up when it comes to furthering my career, as it provided me with an understanding of the current trends. I have also learned so much about the industry and the actual day-to-day business of interior design.”

Working for a third time at the High Point Market with Norwalk Furniture has been a valuable learning experience for Jade Harloff, a senior interior design major from Apex, North Carolina.

“It has allowed me to immerse myself in the world of furniture design and sales, and I’ve been able to keep up with the newest trends and innovations Norwalk has to offer,” said Harloff. “I have interacted with several industry professionals, which has increased my professionalism and communication skills, and I have been able to learn all about the furniture industry and what it entails.”

“I have learned so much about the professional world after college, the ins-and-outs of furniture sales. This experience has done wonders for my level of confidence in terms of being prepared for my future career. I have made meaningful connections with industry professionals, increased my knowledge about interior design and furniture design, and learned about how the professional world will be after I graduate.”

Kaylin LaFleche, a senior interior design major from Severna Park, Maryland, gained knowledge about furniture and design through working as a market associate for Caracole and Jonathan Charles Fine Furniture. She toured designers around the showroom, answered questions about products and helped them place orders.

“Through this experience, I have been able to speak with designers from all over the world and pick their brains for what life after college will entail,” said LaFleche, who was recently elected president of HPU’s new American Society of Interior Designers student chapter.

“One of the scariest parts about senior year is having the quickly approaching deadline to get a full-time job in your field or get into a graduate degree program. My anxieties are always eased when I speak to practicing designers because they reassure me that life is a journey, and you don’t need to figure everything out at 22 years old. They often share stories of how many different facets of design they tried before finding their niche after many years of trial and error.”

LaFleche can talk confidently with designers because she has knowledge about products in the showroom. The experience strengthened her specification skills and her general understanding of what pieces work best for different spaces.

“Overall, working at the High Point Market has been one of my favorite opportunities HPU has exposed me to and encouraged me to participate in,” said LaFleche. “I will truly miss it, but I can’t wait to attend in the future as a designer.”

From left at the Caracole showroom are Mary Kate Hewitt, a junior interior design major with a visual merchandising minor from Hamden, Connecticut; Kaylin LaFleche, a senior interior design major from Severna Park, Maryland; Sara Lafontaine, a junior interior design major from Southington, Connecticut, and Grace Womack, a sophomore business administration major from Greensboro.

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