Teachable Moments: 
the good, the bad, and the undergrads

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Museum of Cultural and Natural History
at
Central Michigan University
Focus: impact of Natural History collection on undergraduates (and on *us*!)

*Spoiler: broader than “just” biology!*
MCNH Origins

• Museum established in 1970
• Comprised collections from across campus

Anthropological & Archaeology Collections
Geological Collections
Historical Collections
Natural History Collections
MCNH Origins

Undergraduates integral to museum work from inception…

Tours/Programs

Exhibiting

Collections Management
Museum Studies Minor Program

24 Credit hours:

- **4 courses (3 credits each):**
  - MST 310 Introduction to Museums
  - MST 315 Museums, Stakeholders, and Communities
  - MST 320 Collections Stewardship and Curatorial Work
  - MST 325 Public Programming in Museum

- **6 hrs of electives**

- **MST 598 Museum Internship (6 hrs)**
MCNH + MST Program = Synergy

• MCNH employs 10-15 undergrads each year
• MCNH involves 40+ volunteers annually
• Students involved in ALL aspects of museum work
Pros & Cons of Our Program

Pros:

• See first hand the importance of collections ("WOW", research and education, personally and to others)

• MST’ers: learning trade hands on

• Learn to problem solve, leadership

• Accountability and Professionalism
Pros & Cons of Our Program

Cons:

• Take a LOT of training, then they’re gone…
  (so is the labor actually cheaper??)

• They are not professionals…

• You have to be really specific

• Sometimes lack natural curiosity/problem solving

• Occasionally not reliable/don’t get it/not responsible….
Conclusions

• It's worth it:
  – They learn
  – They get jobs
  – They reflect positively on us (we love taking them to meetings!)

• We do have more help, we learn from them