

Student Stories Project: Mike Cooper

Audio version available at: <http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/cooper.shtml>

[IU fight song]

Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I'm your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here at IU, from the perks –

“One of the members of the club brought the Mad Money show to campus. Now, that was a big step for both the school and the club.”

– to the hard work –

“Graduate school takes up more time and energy than you can anticipate.”

– to the memories that will last a lifetime.

“I traveled to India in the fall of 2006 with 60 students from the Kelley School of Business.”

Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.

[IU fight song]

SALATA: Today we're at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne speaking with Mike Cooper of the IPFW Ambassadors.

COOPER: Hi, my name is Mike Cooper. I'm a senior at IPFW; I'm majoring in biology and pre-dentistry. I was born and raised in Fort Wayne. Yeah, I was a member of the Ambassadors for an entire year. My interests: I like just hanging out with friends, reading, working out at the gym, playing racquetball, golf, stuff like that.

Why did you choose to attend IPFW?

I'd heard a lot of good things about IPFW. Like, I heard they had really good professors; it's supposed to be a nice campus. And I also could, you know, save money and live with my parents. All those reasons made me choose IPFW.

Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you have had at IPFW.

I was doing research here at IPFW on zebrafish. Part of our job was to check on these big aquarium tanks in this one building and make sure the water level was right. So one day we went in there, it was about 12 o'clock, and the water level was pretty low, so we had to turn on these big hoses to fill the water level back up. And it was, like, taking forever to fill these tanks up, so

I was like, “Well, you know, we’ll just let the water run and we’ll do something else and come back and turn it off.” So we go and do other research, and we ended up leaving the building and forgetting to turn the water off. And this is at, like, 12 o’clock in the afternoon. I went to bed that night, and it was, like, two in the morning, and my cell phone rings. And it was my friend, and he sent me a text message and he was like, “Dude, we forgot to turn the water off in the science building!” And I was like, “Oh, shoot!” you know, I was texting him back, and I was like, “What should we do?” And being the responsible Ambassador leader that I was, I went over to Police and Safety and I had a police officer go over there and make sure the building wasn’t flooded or anything. You know, I just saw my whole future flash before my eyes, you know? So the cop went over there and checked it out, and he said the building looked OK. He didn’t see any water going through the hallways or anything, so he was like, “It looks fine, just go ahead and go back to bed and don’t worry about it.” So anyway, my friend and I, we come back in the morning and check on it ourselves, and, like, the whole place is dry – there’s no water anywhere. And we’re like, “Man, we must have lucked out. Someone must have walked by and turned it off.” Well, I find out – like, I run into my professor in the hallway, and I guess the building manager walked by at like six o’clock in the evening and saw water leaking out in the hallway, so she called my professor during dinnertime, and then he had to come over and they both had to clean up the whole room and everything with, like, a wet-dry vac. He was OK with it because it’s happened before to other students. It’s been worse, like, they were actually doing an experiment and the fish, like, got killed or something. But, like, I lucked out and there was no experiment going on. He was like, “Just make sure you turn the water off next time.”

What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IPFW?

I would encourage them to get involved on campus. I mean, I think your college experience is based on, like, what you put into it. So if you want to put a lot into it, like join a lot of organizations and make a lot of friends and study hard, then you’ll get a lot better experience out of college than if you just kind of came to your classes and didn’t try very hard, slipped by. So I think it’s all what you put into it, so I would encourage students just to do it all, you know. Join a bunch of clubs, take a lot of fun trips.

Tell me a little about the IPFW Ambassadors.

Yeah, the Ambassadors, it’s a leadership organization here on campus. Basically you work directly with the chancellor. You help out at different events around campus, like different ceremonies, like fundraising events, sporting events. Sometimes the chancellor will throw, like, parties, and you can, like, help out there. You don’t get to be a bartender or anything, but you can, like, hang up people’s coats and, you know, meet and greet people. You go to a lot of, like, leadership training sessions as well. Like, we had one session where it was like a business etiquette dinner. We went to the Fort Wayne Country Club and learned about, like, business etiquette, like how to, you know, eat properly at a business meeting, and manners and all that. So that was really helpful. And then we had one training session where we had some kind of writer or professional communicator come in and talk about how to become a better communicator, how to become a good public speaker, how to interact with others in the business world, other people in, like, international relations, too.

How did you find out about the Ambassadors, and why did you decide to become involved?

I first heard about it, like, I got some flier in the mail. The first time I got it, I was like, I looked at it and it sounded pretty cool, but I didn't join it the first year. And then I got it the next year, and I was like, well, it sounds like a pretty good experience. I might as well give it a try. So I tried out for it.

Tell me about an Ambassador event or program that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.

One event that I was kind of proud of, it was like, during freshman orientation week at IPFW and we had a lot of high school students come in and we got to talk with them about IPFW and about our experiences here and try to, you know, convince them to come to the university. That was pretty cool; the students asked a lot of questions.

What challenges have you faced during your participation in the Ambassadors?

One of my biggest challenges is just trying to juggle all of the things I had going on with the Ambassadors with everything else I had going on in my life. Like, I was in a lot of other organizations and clubs, and sometimes it's hard to find ways to, like, manage my time and time conflicts and things like that.

How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in the Ambassadors?

I think my leadership skills have improved a lot. Like I said, you go through a lot of those training sessions, which are really helpful. And plus, just helping out at the different events on campus, you get to network with a lot of professors and, like, famous people – well, famous in Fort Wayne, you know, business professionals and politicians and things like that. You just, I don't know, you just develop your people skills more. And they buy you, like, a nice suit to wear, so just putting that on makes you kind of feel like a leader, you know.

What organizations are you a part of here at IPFW?

I'm in a lot of clubs, like Biology Club, and I actually started the Pre-Dental Club here at IPFW. Oh, and I help out at, like, the health fairs, like take people's blood pressures. Health and Wellness Center volunteer.

What are your future goals, and how do you think IPFW has helped prepare you to meet those goals?

My future goal is to one day become a dentist. IPFW has really helped me meet that goal because I feel like I got a really good education here at IPFW. Like I said, you know, part of it is how much you put into it. I thought I put a lot into it, and, you know, I had great professors, a lot of good classes – I feel like I got a really good education here. I think it's prepared me well to go

into dental school and then go into dentistry. And being in the Ambassadors has helped me become, like, it's really improved my people skills and leadership skills. I think that'll be valuable no matter what field I go into.

What will you miss the most when you graduate?

Probably just, like, hanging out with everyone on campus and, like, having fun and clowning around with people.

We've been talking with Mike Cooper of the IPFW Ambassadors.

[IU fight song]

This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.

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