

# Welcome to Team Sign Shop!

Thank you for considering the Sign Shop as one of your co-op experiences!



We think we're pretty awesome, but don't just take our word for it.

Click one person or scroll through them all to learn what past co-ops have to say about this job and its role in their future careers.



## Katie Gavenda

BFA Graphic Design 2010

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2007  
Summer II/Fall 2009

Other Co-op Experience:  
Northeastern University  
Marketing & Communications

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I liked the independence of the work and trust put into me by management. You really run your own projects, manage your time, and I felt like we had more creative freedom and experience working with a client than at other co-ops.

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

Experiencing the process of designing for and installing something in a three dimensional space. Before I worked at the Sign Shop I didn't realize designing, cutting, and installing vinyl lettering was something I could learn and eventually master. Also, X-acto skills.

## Where is she now?

Katie is the graphic designer for a fair trade clothing and accessories company based out of Chicago, IL. She handles all the social media and some photography in addition to designing their biweekly emails and semi annual catalogs.

She does some other things here and there, but maybe you should just [buy a llama shirt](#) from her?



## Mark Veillette

BFA Graphic Design 2014  
with a minor in Technological  
Entrepreneurship

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2014

Other Co-op Experience:  
Boston Beer Company

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I really loved how hands on the work in the Sign Shop was. A lot of the design work I've done has been strictly digital, but being able to work on a project and physically see it come together is awesome. The work I did at the shop taught me to plan ahead and about the logical and mathematical side of design, which were valuable skills moving forward.

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

Most influential thing that I learned at the Sign Shop was seeing out the design process from start to finish. A lot of the work in the classroom up to my co-op had been only about the design, and didn't take outside factors into account. With this co-op I learned a lot about working with clients who don't always come from design backgrounds, and how to leverage their feedback and provide guidance when needed. I also picked up some less design related skills like invoicing that have been beneficial in my work since.

## Where is he now?

Mark now works full time for the Boston Beer Company as a graphic designer working on point of sale displays, packaging and other marketing collateral. He does a decent amount of freelance on the side, including work for some contacts he met while working at the Sign Shop! As much as he loves his job, he misses all of the cupcakes and candy that were somehow always in the shop.



## Kate Valentine

BS Graphic Design 2009

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2008

Other Co-op Experience:  
MC Communications

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

There are too many answers! The staff are some of the nicest people I've ever met and I've made great friendships from working there! Networking after graduation was easier because of the relationships I developed with University staff. The atmosphere was always fun and comfortable, even during stressful times. It gave me experience working with clients and the creative process, which has been helpful to my professional career. It allowed me to do more than sit in front of a computer for 8 hours each day. I was able to use my hands, be creative, and become more familiar with University events and programs.

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

I would have never found a love for signage and vinyl without working for the Sign Shop. It has opened my eyes to a whole different avenue for design and creativity, much of which I use in my current projects. Because of the skills and experience I've gained, I've also been able to expand on the type of clients and freelance work I'm capable of. I learned about new materials, equipment and practices that I still use frequently in my work.

## Where is she now?

Kate is currently working for a company that sells puzzles, brainteasers and other unique gifts. She has her hands in various projects including catalog design, product development, and puzzle design. Sometimes she models for the catalogs too!

Among other small freelance projects, Kate enjoys designing a variety of printed wedding materials and stationery.



## Brian Nelson

BS Graphic Design 2008

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2005  
Summer II/Fall 2006

Other Co-op Experience:  
MC Communications  
NU Campus Recreation

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

It was an awesome environment. There were older students there who knew the ropes and mentored the younger students, which was a great way to learn. And our supervisors created an environment where we could still be college students. We had a lot of fun, but still got a LOT of work done.

It taught me a lot. After having three very different co-op experiences, I look back on my time at the Sign Shop and realize how important it was for me. I learned so much

about real-world production, managing customers, and knew Illustrator like the back of my hand - way better than most of my other classmates. It's a great way to meet people and get to know the campus. You work with older and (sometimes) younger students at the Sign Shop itself. You also meet a lot of great people while you do your job. Facilities staff, other students, professors, and university staff were all your "clients", so it became a good way for me to network within the campus, too.

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

How to properly create a vector file. Most files that came into the Sign Shop were junk. Extra information, dirty vectors with clipping paths or too many anchor points - stuff that makes plotters and routers angry. Manually cleaning these up was really an important lesson in understanding how vectors work, and it gave me a huge amount of experience in Illustrator. Practical, real-world experience. This is honestly something I use every single day in my current job.

## Where is he now?

Brian is living in CT and working as a Product Designer for a company in LA. He manages a team of web developers in creating a web/mobile app for small businesses. He also does all of the print and web marketing as well as consulting on projects for their larger parent corporation. Brian continues freelance work on the side for many clients that he met here at Northeastern. You can find his work at [briannelsondesign.com](http://briannelsondesign.com)



## Meghan Leavitt

BS Graphic Design 2010

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2007

Other Co-op Experience:  
RueLaLa

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I loved working at the Sign Shop for so many reasons- it's hard to narrow it down, but I chose my top two reasons. First, I'd like to say the people. The people are SO great. Everyone works as a team to get things done and collaborates so well. I don't know what it is about the shop, but it's a magical place that brings in great people. We laugh a lot and truly enjoy working alongside each other. Second, I'd have to say that it's so satisfying to step away from the computer every once in a while and fabricate something yourself. Whether it be a 20-ft banner, installing vinyl lettering on a building, or installing nameplates, it really feels great to get to work with your hands and know you did a great job. And the extra bonus is seeing your work in action on campus ALL the time!

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

I can't count the number of times signage has come up in my professional life. Whether it be street pole city banners, billboards, or space or event signage, it always comes up. The Sign Shop really taught me the tools for this part of design. You have a lot more to consider designing signage such as viewpoint, contrast in the environment, legibility, etc. I always have this "I got this" attitude when it comes to this- which surprises most people.

## Where is she now?

Meg is *the* Marketing & Communications designer at Occidental College in LA. She does web design and print, such as invitations and annual reports. She was recently put in charge of a - you guessed it - signage project! She'll be designing everything for a new wing of the school and reminiscing over the hands-on installation process from the old days at the Sign Shop. Meg also continues freelance design work on the side.



## Dan Donovan

BS Graphic Design 2009

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Spring/Summer I 2008

### Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

The people made the Sign Shop job amazing. It's such a fun environment. There is always so much work going on and having a room filled with designers is an excellent support system for feedback and tips. Getting to see how things work in a real-life setting in terms of designing for the customer with real deadlines and limitations and their own perspective/taste instead of designing for your own work was also a crucial lesson to learn. Doing work with a functional purpose is infinitely more educational than creating theoretical projects for theoretical clients in a classroom.

### What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

Most influential thing I learned at the Sign Shop was how to cut/weed/tape/apply vinyl. It seems simple, and it seems like Sign Shop 101, but that single skill got me three other jobs within 18 months of graduating.

### Where is he now?

Dan is currently a Production Artist for Life Is Good. He's been working in the licensed sports apparel business since college with experience at '47 Brand as well. His work here at the Sign Shop making promo boards for the NU baseball and basketball teams was directly responsible for opening the door to his first gig making sports gear.



## Leah Glennon

BFA Graphic Design 2015

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Spring/Summer I 2012

Other Co-op Experience:  
UbiCare

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I loved having the opportunity to learn and develop some hands on skills in addition to design skills. I felt like working at the shop was a great exercise in learning to compromise with the customer. In design classes you are given a project and although you have to defend your work you don't really have anyone telling you to do something you really don't want to do, if someone makes a suggestion it is typically one that will make your work look better.

At the Sign Shop, as in the real world, you have someone asking for something that may make the project look worse, from a design standpoint. You have to learn to honor customers requests while making the project look as good as possible. I think that this is something that a lot of people don't get to experience until they get their first full time job and at that point it's a very rude awakening, I think it's a great thing to learn early on. The fact that you communicate directly with the customer is huge!

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

Taking ownership of a project and following it through from start to finish. This taught me how to interact with a customer/client and remain professional and productive no matter what the circumstance. It allowed me to design something on a computer and then actually create the final physical product myself and having the responsibility of ensuring that a project stays on schedule every step of the way AND gets delivered on time was a huge responsibility and the time and stress management I learned from that experience has been a HUGE advantage to me.

## Where is she now?

Leah is a Production Artist at Fuseideas, a marketing agency in Boston. She prepares files for print (anything from simple one-pagers to conference booth skins, books, brochures, etc.) and also builds digital files for banner ads and billboards. Leah often sees the entire process through herself, from preparation to finishing. When her previous company had an open position, Leah recruited Brianna, another Sign Shopper, to take the spot. Sign Shop Family for life!





## Michelle Gayowski

BFA Dual Major in 2012  
Graphic Design and  
Interactive Media

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Spring/Summer I 2010

Other Co-op Experience:  
Metropolis Creative  
Marc Fisher Footwear

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I loved walking to work every day, working in a casual but busy environment with really fun co-workers. The radio was always playing, we sat (or stood) at this awesome block table together so conversation was easy but there was always plenty of space elsewhere around the shop to do big projects. I loved the hands-on nature of the job and it was fun to see your work get put up around campus. Also if you happen to work around the holidays, the holiday potluck is THE BEST and you'll always get invited back even after your co-op ends. You get as much autonomy as you are willing to work for, but you have the best team to fall back on for help. I loved it so much I stayed on as a part-timer for 2.5 years after my co-op!

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

The most important skill I got from working at the Sign Shop was great time management! And attention to detail (catching inverted NU seals - yikes!). Sometimes you have slow days but you still have to keep on top of things because the next day someone might request 20 rushed signs ASAP. And you just HAVE to do it.

## Where is she now?

Michelle is living and working as a graphic designer in the Seattle, Washington area. She is at a cloud software startup company called BitTitan.

She also continues to do freelance work, which you can find at [www.michellea.gayowski.com](http://www.michellea.gayowski.com)



## Holly Jamison

BA Studio Art 2013  
Minor in Art History

Sign Shop Co-op:  
Summer II/Fall 2012

Other Co-op Experience:  
Art Therapist in California

## Why did you love working at the Sign Shop?

I loved working at the NU Sign Shop because I got to test the waters in so many different areas. I learned skills I never would have in any other role, and now in my current profession as an Event Planner I'm always amazed at the ways my time at the NU Sign Shop prepared me for where I am now. In addition to learning the various technologies of sign printing, was able to develop and improve my customer service and graphic design skills. Having experience in sign printing now helps in my relationships working with printers as an Event Planner. Above all, one of my truly favorite parts of being at the NU Sign Shop was working with so many awesome people, and the community fostered there. I will always cherish fondly my memories of working at the NU Sign Shop. I've got to say it was a lot of fun!

## What was the most helpful thing you learned working here that sticks with you today?

Really for me the biggest takeaway from my time at the shop wasn't a specific skill or task, but rather, through that experience I learned more about myself and what I do and don't want from a career, both general and specifics. I realized how much I enjoy working in an environment with a supportive and communal team, with the freedom to manage my own time and tasks in a way that works best for me.

## Where is she now?

Holly is working in LA as a Meeting Planner for an investment firm. Before that she worked as a Corporate Event Planner and an Event Manager in Austin, TX. Her career and passions have led her away from the graphic design path, but she says that her Art foundation still plays a role in her project management work. She truly values all of the experiences and opportunities afforded to her through co-op because they have led her to where she is now!