

Connecting Gen Y business students with history

Civil Rights Museum links to Vanderbilt summer program

By Michael Lollar
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The National Civil Rights Museum is looking for ways to attract Generation Y to a museum based on history.

Who do you ask?

The museum turned to a summer business institute at Vanderbilt University made up of 60 students with a passion for business and in the same age range as those the Memphis museum hopes to engage in the chronicle of civil rights.

The students, part of the "Vanderbilt Accelerator Summer Business Institute," will tour the museum today, then brainstorm ideas to raise awareness about the museum and involvement in social activism, said Kimberly Pace, a specialist in communications and brand awareness for the Vanderbilt summer program.

The business institute is like a four-week summer boot camp for students with an interest in business from marketing to finance to real estate. Their summer curriculum includes consulting with several major corporations including FedEx, American Airlines and Lexus. In return, like an academic version of "The Apprentice," students get a chance to meet company CEOs and get a foot in the door for internships.

At the Civil Rights Museum, president Beverly Robertson said museum administrators "want to help bridge the gap between the civil rights movement and a younger demographic who is two generations removed from the movement to get them involved and ensure that segregation, intolerance and injustice continues to be challenged and ultimately changed."

Pace, who helped design a project outline for the museum, said the goal is to reach young adults in that Generation Y age group -- roughly 18-28 -- and get them to visit the museum and tell their friends about it. The students' immediate contribution would be creating three special events or programs to attract that age range and three to five recommendations about improving the museum brand image to better connect and attract the 18-28 age group.

-- Michael Lollar: 529-2793