About this Publication

The Dietrich College Internship Insider provides helpful advice from Dietrich College students in identifying, applying for, and participating in a wide range of internships. We hope their stories inspire your own personal internship exploration.

Make an appointment with your academic advisor and career consultant to learn more about internship opportunities.

Career and Professional Development Center:

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TartanTrak: www.cmu.edu/career/tartantrak
Township Valley Farm
Sacramento, CA | townshipvalleyfarm.com

JESSICA WALLACH, DC ‘16
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICS / AFRICAN STUDIES
Intern, Summer 2015
Hometown: Long Beach, CA

What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I was able to craft a persuasive letter to the farm after I met with my career counselor that stressed my enthusiasm and willingness to work hard. I also had previous experience working in the realm of agriculture.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I researched farms that would hire for a short summer period on the ATTRA internship’s webpage: https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/. I wrote to a couple farms, and called them about a month later to follow up.

What did you do as an intern at Township Valley Farm?
Crop planning, soil and compost building, greenhouse tasks, seed sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, packing, deliveries, etc. Product production/packaging, craft beer brewing, tractor driving, welding, canning/jarring, fruit drying, various farm infrastructure construction/maintenance (irrigation, fencing, etc.), sheep and chicken caretaking, vermi/worm composting, dinner preparation and cleanup.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I loved being outside every day, learning new skills and getting out of my (academic) comfort zone. It was also inspiring to see a young, sustainable, and organic farm succeeding in today’s industrial agricultural climate.

What was challenging about your internship?
It was challenging to be put into a new situation and to deal with the hot weather. However, the fun of living so differently from the school year more than made it worth it!

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: April  Accepted by: May

Call to follow up! When I called Township Valley Farm a month after I had applied, they told me that they were “paralyzed by choice” with interns since they had gotten so many applications. Because I was the one to call them, they chose me over the others.

NEED TO KNOW
Unpaid Internship
Received a Dietrich College Summer Internship Opportunity Grant
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I previously completed two internships in creative industries, one with a fashion design company and the other with a film non-profit. I had film production experience at Pittsburgh Filmmakers and had directed and edited short films for various classes. With my English and Professional Writing majors, I’ve developed strong reading and writing skills.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I took advantage of the network of people I know in the Los Angeles film industry.

What did you do as an intern at Echo Lake Entertainment?
My most important responsibility was reading scripts and writing script coverage. I assisted managers with various research projects on topics such as limited series development and E-Books. I also consistently researched a major newspaper database for articles that could inspire TV series and feature film premises and characters, which he would pass along to screenwriters he represents. My internship manager also taught me how to answer and roll calls for managers and agents.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Everyone at Echo Lake was incredibly friendly and eager to help me learn the most that I could about the film development and financing processes. It was so interesting to read scripts and see what stories screenwriters thought were unique, relevant, and marketable.

What was challenging about your internship?
Reading and writing for almost 8-9 hours non-stop on a daily basis took some getting used to. It was a reality shock to realize how long and grueling the process of becoming a producer or manager truly is for most people. You usually work as an assistant for 5-7 years and then do not have an official “producer” title until you are in your 40s.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Good communication skills and a thorough understanding of human behavior and decision making gave me an advantage in securing the marketing intern position.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I searched online for internship opportunities in Pittsburgh, then emailed the recruiting manager at Steeltown. After reading through my resume and cover letter, the company scheduled an interview.

What did you do as an intern at Steeltown Entertainment Project?
I managed the company’s social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc), did a daily media sweep on Pittsburgh-related entertainment news, organized “The Pittsburgh List”, helped advertise the company’s next reality show online and offline.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed learning more about Pittsburgh, and seeing its entertainment business grow, including teen-made indie movies and reality shows. Working with my co-workers was another great aspect of the internship, as I learned how to collaborate and to convey my ideas to others.

What was challenging about your internship?
Understanding the general public of the social media, and making the posts/pictures interesting to attract more people were the most challenging aspect of the internship. Coming up with brilliant ideas to appeal to the public was difficult.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: May    Accepted by: May
It is crucial to contact the company as soon as possible, and constantly show your interest to the field with follow-up emails and thank you letters.

NEED TO KNOW
Unpaid Internship
Academic Credit
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
The position required a lot of statistical knowledge and understanding. As an Economics and Statistics major at CMU, I was more than prepared to answer any and all questions that were asked of me in the interview process. The Statistics department at CMU did a great job of preparing me to speak about my skills and provided me with the project background to remain confident during my interviews.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
Over the course of the application process, I applied to over 70 companies. Securing a job in the sports industry required a lot of networking. Contacting different professionals in different organizations was key. I was the president and founding member of the CMU Tartan Sports Analytics club, which gave me great grounds to speak and connect with employers in the sports industry.

What did you do as an intern at the NY Mets?
As an intern with the NY Mets I was responsible for helping the Business Intelligence Team perform any and all tasks and projects that came our way. We worked with all aspects of the business helping solve and optimize their tasks using advanced analytics and modeling.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Working in a baseball stadium was pretty incredible, and the people that I worked with were extremely smart. As a New Yorker and a huge baseball fan, this job was a dream come true.

What was challenging about your internship?
One of my main challenges was the workload. Working on multiple projects at once proved to be hard to manage. Meeting the deadlines for all these projects sometimes led to late nights. This taught me how to better manage my time. Another big challenge was concentrating on my work during home day games! When there is a professional sport being played 40 feet from your office, it’s hard not to watch.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: February  
Accepted by: March
Tip #1: it’s all about networking! You hear it all the time but networking is a huge part of landing your dream job, especially within an industry that is extremely exclusive. Tip #2: be able to back up what you say on your resume. Tip #3: don’t be afraid to take on a challenge. There are few skills that students at CMU cannot learn, so if you don’t fulfill all the required skills of a job it doesn’t mean you shouldn’t apply. Challenges are only going to make your smarter and stronger!
MAIREAD PETTIT, DC ‘15  
PROFESSIONAL WRITING  

Annual Giving Intern, Summer 2015  
Hometown: Grottoes, VA  

What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?  
I think my experience in development at The Kennedy Center during the CMU/WSP and the fact that I’m a professional writing major were the two biggest reasons I was offered this position. I had strong recommendations from my supervisor at The Kennedy Center and from various individuals around campus that spoke to my writing skills and my attention to detail. I also had strong writing samples showcasing the types of writing development work.  

What are the steps you took to land your internship?  
There’s an application available online, which I submitted along with a cover letter, resume, and writing samples. I also had two letters of recommendation submitted on my behalf. I submitted those around February and interviewed in mid-March. I was offered the position a couple of weeks later.  

What did you do as an intern at Wolf Trap?  
I was the Annual Giving intern at Wolf Trap, so I worked with donors who fall under the member programs. This includes individuals up to around $25,000 a year and corporate sponsors and partners. Since Wolf Trap’s main season is in the summer, my job consisted of pulling guest lists for our members’ lounge, and ensuring that members have a good experience. I also worked with a couple different databases, research donors, and draft communications.  

What did you enjoy about your internship?  
The office culture is very open and friendly, so I really enjoyed working with everyone else and experiencing a Wolf Trap summer. I find this work very fulfilling since I’m working to support an organization with great values and missions.  

What was challenging about your internship?  
I think the most challenging aspect of this internship was the pace. Many things I worked on had very tight deadlines, so getting into the mindset of quick turnarounds took time. I also needed to learn when to say no to projects, even if I wanted the experience, because I had just too much on my plate.  

INSIDER TIPS  
Applied by: February  
Accepted by: April  

Aside from the general interview tips, being able to communicate why you want to work specifically in a performing arts focused atmosphere is so important. This is a field that is driven by people’s passion for the arts.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Consulting is all about networking and having great communication skills. Those skills combined with the technical projects I worked on in classes really helped me have a solid pitch to interviewers.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I applied online through TartanTrak and also attended a tech talk on campus. I kept in touch with the speakers which helped me grow my network and learn more about the company.

What did you do as an intern at Accenture?
My responsibilities included attending the client-site meetings, performing both front-end and back-end development for the client’s eCommerce site using a platform called Demandware, and helping the Accenture Digital practice maintain its internal Knowledge site.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I was fortunate enough to be on a project that allowed me to travel a lot during the summer, which gave me a true feel for the consulting lifestyle and allowed me to meet many people.

What was challenging about your internship?
The most challenging part about my internship was having to learn the Demandware platform language and structure in the first two weeks of my internship. It was not like any other platform I’ve worked with, but our classes taught us the basics which helped me adapt quicker than most people.

Networking is key in any industry, so start early and don’t be afraid to reach out to people, whether it’s your peers, alumni, or current employees.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
As a member of the CMU Wall Street Club, I gained valuable networking and interview skills that helped tremendously in landing the interview and subsequent offer. I’ve also had financial valuation experience through the Tartan Student Fund and was able to fluently talk about the financial markets by regularly keeping up with the Wall Street Journal.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
During my sophomore fall semester, I emailed and did informational phone interviews with hundreds of alumni/friends/referrals on Wall Street to learn more about the industry and gain valuable recruiting advice. In addition, I made five trips to NYC during the semester to grab coffee and lunch with my networking contacts and try to get my resume referred.

What did you do as an intern at Citi?
Depending on which rotation I was in, my responsibilities included conducting market research, building financial valuation models, updating financial spreadsheets, and revising pitchbooks.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I really enjoyed the fact that the internship was rotational in nature, which allowed me to spend my summer within investment banking, sales and trading, and capital markets origination. As a rising junior, this was an unparalleled opportunity to experience various jobs in the financial services industry, and allowed me to figure out what I wanted to pursue for next summer.

What was challenging about your internship?
The biggest challenge was having to regularly adjust to new environments and types of work. A trading floor is very different from an investment banking cubicle, and having to transition every three weeks definitely made it hard to really get settled into one division. It also limited the significance of projects and tasks that I was placed on, compared to the junior summer analysts at Citi.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: November    Accepted by: January
Networking is probably the most important move you can make in terms of getting your foot into the door and attracting attention from recruiters. After that, it’s crucial to prepare for behavioral and technical interviews by reading online guides, studying, and doing mock interviews with experienced professionals and upperclassmen.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

It is imperative that you have strong writing skills. People will not take you seriously if there are errors in your emails, memos, and reports. Additionally, most companies—financial and otherwise—will expect you to be comfortable with MS Office. Being comfortable asking questions and having a great work ethic are key ingredients in securing an internship, and making it successful.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I was applying to several internship opportunities and I had to prioritize my time and resources. By February, I identified this internship as my top choice. I stayed updated on relevant accomplishments and familiarized myself with the office’s mission. Once I was called for an interview, I set the date and scheduled a mock interview, to polish my interview skills.

What did you do as an intern at J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.?

As an intern in Field Exam, it was my job to learn how to value a company. Field exam is the part of the bank that goes out to companies that want loans and evaluates whether or not they are worthy of a loan. This means running tests on inventory and management, reading balance sheets and extrapolating data. On a day to day basis, I helped examiners compile data and put together reports.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

Almost everything I did required me to learn something new and then build on that knowledge. It’s also exciting to be doing real work that yields a tangible product that is used by the bank to evaluate a company’s creditworthiness.

What was challenging about your internship?

It’s a little challenging to come from a school like CMU where everybody is doing something all the time to a place like JPMC Commercial Banking which is a little slower paced.

Networking is very critical to getting an internship in the business world. Build relationships with CMU alumni and then ask them for help with applying to internships and such. Companies would rather hire someone who has made the effort to forge a connection already than someone who is just a name on a sheet of paper.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I had taken classes that were related to the projects and I had experience consulting.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I spoke with the professor who runs Technology Consulting in the Global Community (TCinGC) and discussed why the program was interesting to me and how it would help me grow and develop as a student.

What did you do as an intern at the Palau Financial Intelligence Unit?
I developed a database and electronic filing system so that the FIU could efficiently organize and analyze reports from banks.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed the opportunity to experience another culture and use my knowledge to make a visible impact on their lives.

What was challenging about your internship?
One of the biggest challenges of consulting is finding a solution that is sustainable for your client. This was particularly difficult in a remote location like Palau, since they have limited access to technology and people capable of maintaining technology.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My technical background, interpersonal skills, and written and oral communication abilities enabled me to secure this internship. All of these factors enabled me to succeed in a primarily client-facing industry, which relies on human capital as its most profitable investment.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
After being recommended by one of my professors, I attended PwC’s national summer leadership program, Elevate, for three days in June of 2014. I received my offer for the following year shortly thereafter.

What did you do as an intern at PricewaterhouseCoopers?
As an intern, I had a myriad of responsibilities ranging from aggregating and analyzing data in Excel and Informatica to running queries on SQL databases. I worked with a team on an Anti-Money Laundering project for a major financial client and assisted with the documentation and development of a risk scoring system to identify any possible threats.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Not only was the forensics work highly interesting in itself, but the people I worked with – fellow interns, partners, and especially my team – were inspiring. I am a strong believer that you are changed by every human interaction, and the strengths and abilities of each of the individuals I met simply motivated me to become both a better professional and a better person.

What was challenging about your internship?
In a fast paced work environment with demanding hours, it’s necessary to accept the challenge of grasping concepts and ideas quickly and managing your time efficiently; however, I have learned that asking questions and voicing concerns about any confusion are the best ways to rise up to these challenges.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: April Accepted by: August
Network! Connecting with other professionals, no matter which company they are affiliated with, enables you to broaden both your interests and horizons and discover numerous opportunities in your career path.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My background in research and writing definitely helped my application. I work as a Research Associate in the Center for International Relations and Politics.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I looked at the Center for International Relations and Politics’ website database and applied to many places. The application required a cover letter, a resume, and an information sheet. When I got an email for a phone interview, I set up a time to use the interview rooms in the basement of the UC and was offered the position soon after.

What did you do as an intern at the Department of Education?
Part of my job was assisting in the creation of briefing books for the Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education. I attended meetings with the staff to learn about the different grants and programs that we are currently funding.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I loved the fact that my supervisor wanted me to get the most out of my summer in Washington, DC. She always allowed me to attend additional events offered by my housing program or the Department of Education, which included foreign policy classes in the Department of State, lunches with important Department of Education officials, and the chance to see presidential candidates speak in smaller settings.

What was challenging about your internship?
Since I was the only intern for the Office of the Assistant Secretary, I was technically available to any staff member on the floor. Therefore, prioritizing documents was difficult during the beginning of my internship. In order to solve this problem, I had a direct conversation with the supervisor who hired me which helped me understand how to manage tasks from different departments and positions.
French Embassy
Communications Office
Washington, DC | www.franceintheus.org

CRISTINA MARTIN, DC ’16
GLOBAL STUDIES / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICS
Press and Communications Intern, Summer 2015
Hometown: Malaga, Spain

What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Being fluent in French and interested and familiar with French culture and politics, having an interest in diplomacy, and showing good writing skills all helped me get the internship.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I completed an application online (including two short essays about France in English and a cover letter in French), then I got a response and had an interview, and heard back less than a week later.

What did you do as an intern at the French Embassy?
My job was to work on producing a monthly newsletter called “News From France,” which included writing articles on French-American relations, not only in politics but in business, technology and culture.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed being part of a team that was working to strengthen the relationship between the US and France. At the time I was working at the embassy, France was involved in many important diplomatic events, like the G7 summit and the Iran Nuclear Deal negotiations. It was interesting to see it from the point of view of a diplomatic power like France.

What was challenging about your internship?
Working at the Press and Communications office, we had to make sure that everything that was published shed a positive light on France and French-American relations. This is totally understandable, since that is one of the most important goals of an embassy. However, it was sometimes a little frustrating to have to be very careful with what was being said or the way it was being said, especially when talking about controversial events like the Iran Nuclear Deal negotiations. It was really interesting to experience diplomacy from this perspective.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: February       Accepted by: April

Writing and research skills are always really important in these types of organizations, no matter what the topic you’re writing about it, so take your class papers seriously and talk about your research. For an embassy, it is obviously really important to have a general knowledge of the country, and to be interested in diplomacy.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
The fact that I am so passionate about my major and what I study is definitely what gave me leverage in securing the internship. I am interested in policy and am hoping to pursue law school in the future. Having this enthusiasm is what led me to take initiative and seek out an internship that would help me gain the relevant experiences and familiarize myself with the legal field.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I heard about the LA City Attorney’s Office and sent a resume and cover letter to human resources. I heard back within a few weeks, set up a phone interview with a prospective supervisor, and got the job on the spot.

What did you do as an intern at the LA City Attorney’s Office?
I helped attorneys prepare cases and do research, communicated with 12 divisions of the LAPD, attended trials, sometimes served as a Korean translator, and reached out to victims and witnesses.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
While my supervisors and co-workers were all very intense, they were all also constantly friendly and willing to help. If I had upcoming job interviews for prospective internships, everyone would offer to help me prepare and attorneys would offer to let me use their offices for phone/Skype interviews.

What was challenging about your internship?
The fact that this was my first formal job and that I had never had much working experience was the most challenging part about the internship. It was hard to get used to the culture and such a fast-paced environment. Since this was a government job, everything was high-security and confidentiality was crucial.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: March  
Accepted by: April

Do your research and be proactive! The LA City Attorney’s Office usually does not send out public listings for undergraduates. The Central Trials branch is the largest of the branches within the Attorney’s Office, and they generally only take law students. While TartanTrak has great listings for potential jobs, don’t limit yourselves to school resources or job search websites. If you have a specific place in mind where you would like to work, get in touch with their recruiter or human resources and see if they have any openings even if they haven’t posted public listings.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Communications and writing skills were very important, as well as a working knowledge of politics. The interview mostly revolved around current events.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I submitted an application via the Congressman’s website, then had a couple of interviews.

What did you do as an intern at the office of Rep. Stephen Lynch?
It was a lot of administrative work, like answering phones and emails and drafting letters to constituents. I also got to do a lot of research for upcoming bills, draft position papers for the congressman, and attend relevant hearings and bill markups. It was a great experience.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Since government interns are unpaid, they get a lot of opportunities like attending events and lectures. I got to hear people like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Janet Yellen, Jacob Lew, and Lee Goodman speak!

What was challenging about your internship?
Keeping up with all the assignments was challenging. All the different legislative assistants gave interns work, so sometimes it was tough getting everything done on time. Also, walking between the house office buildings and the capitol in heels was really hard.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

In Hill internships, it’s all about the interview. Knowing as much as I could about the Senator and talking in depth about his legislation showed my skills as a candidate. Highlighting how I would work with angry constituents as well as my ability to remain on top of the work they’d throw at me showed that even though I had a quant background, I could handle working with people and reading a lot of policy. The entire interview took 15 minutes, so there’s no room for error.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I applied online through the website.

What did you do as an intern at Senator Sherrod Brown’s office?

Answering phone calls, logging constituent opinions, sorting mail, attending briefings, writing memos, giving Capitol tours, running errands (and things to the senator), reading economics research papers and summarizing for the legislative staff, and working on different projects for the Legislative Aide in economic policy.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

Washington, DC, is constantly crackling with energy. It’s the true ‘agora’. I really enjoyed the opportunity to wander around the capitol. I was extremely thankful to work in an office surrounded by people who care so much about the work that they do and the people they serve.

What was challenging about your internship?

It’s difficult switching from doing math all the time to not even thinking about mathematics. I was able to incorporate more quantitative analysis into my work, but working on the Hill definitely sharpens one’s soft skills. You have to ask for work here—you can’t expect it to come to you. So learning to be proactive with my extra time was also a challenge.

INSIDER TIPS

Applied by: March  
Accepted by: April

Apply to offices where you’re in their constituency. They’re looking to hire from their bases so that the people answering phone calls understand callers’ intentions and needs. Most offices throw away the applications of interns from out of state—they just don’t have the time. And if you have the connections to get an interview, don’t be afraid to use them.

NEED TO KNOW

Unpaid Internship

Milton & Cynthia Friedman Summer Fellowship
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Writing, quantitative analysis, statistical inference, and communication skills all helped me get this internship.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I participated in the CMU/WSP and did a lot of research with the program’s help.

What did you do as an intern at the The White House Initiative?
Sending out monthly AAPI Economic Zone newsletters to subscribed government organizations, organization leaders, and others interested in the work and federal assistance WHIAAPI offers to AAPI-owned small businesses; putting together powerpoints, flyers, and other logistical work regarding Native Hawaiian education briefing; organizing AAPI Bullying Prevention Taskforce meetings at the Dept of Education, as well as pulling together analysis reports on Bullying Prevention Roundtables held in different states; hosting live-video interviews/Google Hangouts at Google in DC.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Since the organization was small, interns were given the opportunity to get involved in organizing and planning reports, blogs, and more. The supervisors didn’t treat any of the interns like students, but as employees and trusted us with a lot of the work. They didn’t hesitate to give us constructive criticism and see us grow professionally during our time at WHIAAPI, which I personally appreciated. The networking opportunities that came with working with our supervisors also made the work interesting and productive. The staff at WHIAAPI felt like family because everyone was young, yet intelligent and passionate about their work. I became more aware of the issues surrounding AAPI citizens and communities and what exactly the federal government is doing to assist these communities.

What was challenging about your internship?
The amount of work was very high, especially leading up to the White House Summit held in May 2015. I learned what it was like to feel passionate about the work and be willing to stay late with staff members to pull together what we considered our best work.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: November       Accepted by: December
Make sure you give yourself time to research the advocacy work that WHIAAPI does and why it’s relevant to your field of interest.
**What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?**
I believe it was more of me showing great interest and passion for the specific opportunity.

**What are the steps you took to land your internship?**
I applied for many different opportunities related to my interests.

**What did you do as an intern at the EOP?**
Within the Executive Office of the President, most of my responsibilities were in accounting. I worked primarily with invoices and deobligations.

**What did you enjoy about your internship?**
I enjoyed the great work environment and the exposure that I received in accounting.

**What was challenging about your internship?**
The most challenging component was learning new terminology and getting over the learning curve.

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**INSIDER TIPS**

Applied by: January  
Accepted by: April

Work hard to find a good match for the experience and don’t get too deterred throughout the process.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My previous experience with working in a fast-paced workplace and also taking assignments from multiple bosses at any given time demonstrated to my employer that I could handle a flexible and demanding work schedule.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I reached out through my previous employers (US Trade Representative) for any other opportunities within the Executive Office of the President. They heard about some opening in Legislative Affairs within the Office of Management and Budget, so I applied and was lucky enough to hear back.

What did you do as an intern at The White House?
Track budgetary legislation, help publish Statement of Administration Policies in response to congressional actions, screen calls from congressional staffers, bring testimonies and other documents to Capitol Hill, attend Committee Hearings, and be a general jack-of-all-trades around the office.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed the fast paced work environment. There was always a lot of work to do. I gained great professional experience. It was amazing working around the White House as well.

What was challenging about your internship?
The job required a high degree of social intelligence. The best kind of intern must be able to receive instructions once and not have to clarify anything. You must also be acutely aware of the bureaucratic nature involved with working for the government.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: March Accepted by: April
Be advised that an undergraduate intern working for the White House will not be asked to conduct critical analysis or write policy reports. That work is reserved for graduate interns. It’s more important for these kinds of employers that you come across as hard working and a quick learner rather than showing off what kind of quantitative skills you have. That being said, it always helps to know what you’re talking about from either a policy or political perspective.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Knowledge of technology policy and regulation, passion for said subject, and strong writing skills, all helped me secure my internship.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I contacted AEI regarding the internship, sent in a writing sample, and discussed possible research topics during the phone interview.

What did you do as an intern at the American Enterprise Institute?
I conducted my own research, helped scholars with their research, and handled communications for AEI (twitter, email, website updates).

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I met a lot of great contacts, who were all able to help me hone my research and writing skills.

What was challenging about your internship?
It was hard to juggle multiple projects at once, some long-term and some short-term, and still stick to deadlines for my own research paper.
The Brookings Institution

YIKUN CHI, DC ‘17
DECISION SCIENCE / MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Research Intern in Center for Technology Innovation, Spring 2015
Hometown: Beijing, China

What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Quantitative as well as qualitative analytical skills and the ability to understand technology in the context of social sciences helped me get this internship.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I applied online as part of the Carnegie Mellon University Washington Semester Program (CMU/WSP).

What did you do as an intern at the Brookings Institution?
I produced research summaries, reports, and other ad-hoc based tasks related to fellows’ research.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
The work itself and colleagues were wonderful. Brookings is a leading think tank not only in U.S. but also in the world. The internship provided the opportunity to work on some of the most prominent policy issues with distinguished researchers. More importantly, those fellows and researchers took a genuine interest in me. The internship program itself was well coordinated with routine check-ins to make sure everything was going well.

What was challenging about your internship?
Workload management, time constraints, and topic familiarity were at times challenging. An intern will normally support multiple fellows and research analysts. Although it provides the benefit of exposure to multiple areas, it also creates challenges in workload and time management. It is critical to constantly communicate with the supervising research analyst. Topic familiarity was another challenge. The topics I worked with ranging from Health Information Exchange to national manufacturing support strategy. Interns had to be comfortable with working on very unfamiliar topics.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: November   Accepted by: November

Really understand the research area of the center or office you apply to. Search which fellow you will be supporting and read over his or her research prior to interview. It will also give you a good idea about whether the internship will be a good fit or not.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I had a lot of quantitative research experience, which I think gave me an edge over the other applicants. In addition, I demonstrated interest in education issues, general policy issues, and progressive values. I could also speak to a lot of experiences with time management and leadership roles.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
As a student in the CMU/WSP, I applied through the Center’s application process, and was originally offered a position at another department. I asked if there were any openings at the Domestic Policy office instead, which is where I originally wanted to work, and had the internship coordinator talk with the policy teams to see if there were any openings for me. After another interview, I got placed on the education policy team.

What did you do as an intern at the Center for American Progress?
I helped the policy analysts on the team research policy solutions and analyze data in areas of education policy such as teacher preparation, racial and gender achievement gaps, teacher compensation reform, and Common Core standards.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Interns were given real, substantial work to do – there was never a point where I felt that the work I was doing didn’t matter. I helped write the initial draft of a policy memo that CAP will publish on a teacher preparation academy model. I recommended work be done in an area where I thought CAP could be doing more, in policy issues surrounding LGBT students in schools, and my supervisor took it and ran with it, asking me eventually to draft an outline for an entire paper on the subject.

What was challenging about your internship?
It was hard to manage everything all at once. We would have events at the same time that a big paper was being published and needed to be triple fact checked before then, and sometimes it felt like we needed to be at 30 places at once. I didn’t have any experience working on policy such as this before, so getting sort of thrown into the thick of things was both challenging and exciting at the same time.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: July   Accepted by: October
Establish a good relationship with the internship coordinator, and try to set up relationships within the specific team you want to work with. Working in policy is all about knowing people. Keep your options broad. For example, even if your main interest is in criminal justice policy, try working in education policy or LGBT policy because they all intersect at some point, a diverse background is appreciated. On that note, work in your quantitative skills that you have from CMU into your internship – policy people love having interns that know how to use Excel, partly because they are so few and far between.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Formal and informal writing, interpersonal skills (particularly on the telephone), and an active interest in the organization's work gave me an advantage.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I learned about CAL from Prof. Dick Tucker and applied to their internship program in February. I made a point of tailoring some academic research during the semester to the kinds of things that the organization does, which I think demonstrated that I was actually interested in their work.

What did you do as an intern at the Center for Applied Linguistics?
I assisted with several different projects by providing logistical support, preparing materials for workshops, transcribing interviews, making phone calls, and providing research support.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I had a fair amount of freedom to determine my workload. Everything that I worked on was extremely interesting content-wise, so even if the task was repetitive, I felt as if I was absorbing and learning a lot.

What was challenging about your internship?
It was a strange feeling to be a short term employee in an office of people who have worked together for a long time. However, as soon as I reached out to anyone for help, they were happy to help me.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: February    Accepted by: April
Non-profits generally have plenty of ‘big picture’ people, if you can demonstrate that you are both interested in what they do and also that you have the skills to help with the nuts and bolts of operations then you will definitely attract interest.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I’m pretty good at writing, but I don’t think experience was what got me the internship. If anything, my ability to talk about my interests helped the most.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I sent an email. That’s it. Well, I sent an email and then talked about why I was interested on the phone, but it really came down to the email. The internship was not posted anywhere, but I took the initiative to ask if they were interested in hiring an intern for the summer.

What did you do as an intern at GovTrack?
I kept a report on the congressional daily digest and wrote summaries of interesting bills. I also provided feedback to my supervisor on projects.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I can’t stand doing work that isn’t important. My work felt important. I was able to see how many people read my writing and the comments they left on my writing.

What was challenging about your internship?
“Okay I wrote the report for today and did three summaries. What should I do next?” “Figure it out”
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Skills that gave me advantage in applying for my internship included my knowledge and experience in social justice issues, the research skills I have from my history additional major, and my experience in working in political offices.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I first applied to and was accepted into the CMU Washington Semester Program and explained my interests to the program directors. They compiled a list of internships I could apply to, which included this internship opportunity, and places where I could look for internships. I was contacted for an interview and was then given an offer a few days later.

What did you do as an intern at the NAACP?
My responsibilities as an intern were divided into two. There was the general administrative work that all the interns did because the central office was mainly run by interns. This kind of work involved organizing, dealing with general calls and complaints, including intaking legal redress complaints. Then, each of the interns were assigned to work with one of the committees. My committee was the Economic Empowerment Committee, which tried to address racial economic inequality in DC. I got to run a project to make a business toolkit to help aspiring black business owners in DC start their own businesses.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed being able to work with people and having a lot of independence running the project. The toolkit was a labor of love on a lot of peoples’ parts and helped inspire me when creating a thesis project for my senior year.

What was challenging about your internship?
The challenging thing about my internship was the work environment. There often weren’t that many people or that much interaction in the office, which I didn’t enjoy. It was harder to concentrate when I didn’t have other people around me also working.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: November  
Accepted by: December
You should make sure to be interested and care about civil rights and social justice issues.

NEED TO KNOW
Unpaid Internship
CMU/WSP
Milton & Cynthia Friedman Summer Fellowship
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My past experience in science, including classes like Physics 1 and 15-112, showed that I would be able to understand the research being done at PNNL. Having concrete evidence from classes showed my strong writing and editing skills.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
My first contact with PNNL was at the EOC. I talked with the recruiter, passed my resume along. In a few weeks, someone in the communications department requested a portfolio. We set up an interview, and then I made sure to keep in touch at least every other week.

What did you do as an intern at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory?
The majority of my job was interviewing scientists and writing articles about their work. I also wrote proposals and nominations, social media posts, and announcements about the various programs and facilities; edited and formatted other writers’ work; drafted an editorial calendar; and helped overhaul the website.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
As an intern, I was able to work in a lot of different areas, and being able to learn a little bit about a lot of different cutting-edge research is why I want to be a science writer. The culture was laid back, but everyone was still invested in their work. I also was looking for somewhere within driving distance of my hometown, and PNNL fit the bill.

What was challenging about your internship?
At first, it was a little difficult to keep track of all the affiliations of the programs and scientists. Sometimes I would be writing an article about a scientist from another institution who won an award from a professional society, and used equipment from PNNL and data from another facility. Making sure everyone got their credit while still highlighting my institution could be hard, but it was important not to step on anyone’s toes. This internship was my first office job, as well, and the nine-to-five life was an adjustment.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: February    Accepted by: May

Science and technology organizations don’t seem to list job openings for communications people very often—but someone has to do the writing. My boss wasn’t even considering an intern until the recruiter gave him my resume. Also, being proactive and not just replying with a form response, but actually addressing topics that came up in the interview, helps show your interest, and lets you smooth over any rough spots as well as highlight your strengths.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
PIPS values an interdisciplinary approach. During the interview I was able to talk about policy issues from multiple perspectives, drawing parallels between fields.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I submitted an online application consisting of a resume, cover letter, and letters of recommendation, and then had a phone interview two weeks later.

What did you do as an intern at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies?
Every intern is expected to design a long-term project, culminating in a policy recommendation, that they work on throughout the internship and present to the PIPS fellows. My other responsibilities revolved around assisting the research fellows with their own work. For example, a piece of legislation related to PIPS’s interests was being passed on the Hill, and I was responsible for prepping our Hill liaison for his meetings with Hill staff.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed the amount of freedom PIPS gave its interns in determining our individual projects. I was involved in the work being done by PIPS fellows, but was also able to pursue interests of my own as well. When working on projects for the PIPS fellows, I wasn’t just working on it for them, it always felt like we were collaborating, in part because they asked me my opinions on the projects or proposals, and whether I thought certain aspects were feasible or not. In other internships I’ve had, the work is very impersonal, so the back-and-forth exchange of ideas was nice. I was constantly busy, and as soon as I finished a project they had another one for me, so I felt I was making productive use of my time.

What was challenging about your internship?
With policy issues, sometimes the information you need isn’t readily accessible. At times it was frustrating. I felt I was searching for data/material that didn’t exist, but that’s the nature of the work.

**Gabriel Shoglow-Rubenstein, BHA ’16**
BHA: PSYCHOLOGY & VIOLIN
Sustainability Fellow, Summer 2015
Hometown: Weston, CT

**INSIDER TIPS**

Applied by: March    Accepted by: April

Whichever PIPS center you apply for (there are several) be aware of current real-world policy developments related to its area of focus, and think about how they relate to your course of study at CMU. It’s expected that you have a grasp of the technical aspects of your studies, but the policy connection isn’t always as clear. In general, they like creative, outside-the-box thinkers who aren’t afraid to voice their opinions.

**NEED TO KNOW**

Unpaid Internship
Milton & Cynthia Friedman Summer Fellowship
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
As a result of history and writing courses, I have gained extensive researching skills and a capacity to read/annotate many journals in a short period of time. Time management was a skill that proved to be an asset in a work environment that relies on multiple projects being done in a timely fashion.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I submitted a resume and cover letter along with three academic references to the Director of Policy and Programs. After she read over my application we had a phone interview, in which we talked about the mission and how I would be able to assist them. Then she asked for a couple writing samples and got in touch my references.

What did you do as an intern at the Tahirih Justice Center?
I wrote in-house memos for the Public Policy department. Specifically, I worked for the Forced Marriage Initiative team and general Public Policy team on research projects that will be used for further policy development and advocacy. This entailed hours of research and data gathering that I drafted into a 5-10 page memo on a specific topic of interest.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
The work environment was incredible. My office was lead by mostly women, which was not surprising given the mission of the non-profit, yet truly awe-inspiring. The office was open and friendly and not competitive in a way that brought people down but instead encouraged all the staff members to achieve their best. In addition, I was around our clients constantly while in the office and could see on a first hand basis the impact we were making on each of these women and girls’ lives.

What was challenging about your internship?
For a lot of the research I was conducting I came across empirical studies, and since I have no experience with analyzing empirical data I had to spend extra time on these reports. I have learned the importance of obtaining the necessary skills to understand such data and would recommend for anyone interested in policy and/or the law to take an empirical methods class.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: February  
Accepted by: March

The Tahirih Justice Center is a non-profit that provides legal, social, and advocacy work to immigrant women and girls suffering gender-based violence. What they look for in an intern is someone that passionately wants to combat these gender-based injustices. I am part of several organizations on campus that deal with gender-based violence so this immediately made me an ideal candidate. In addition, they look for people who can manage their time well and engage enthusiastically in team projects.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My technical background was really important in securing this internship. The interviews were mainly technical and knowing the different data structures and common algorithm questions were really helpful.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I applied online and got an interview after passing Amazon’s online test. I looked over a lot of the data structures and algorithm interview questions before my interview and that was definitely helpful for the interview.

What did you do as an intern at Amazon.com?
My team was the Kindle Content Experience team, which was responsible for the sampling experience of the kindle book when a consumer purchases a book. Since the current sampling experience on a mobile browser has very little features, the UX team proposed a new UX design for that experience. My project involved taking the UX design, and implementing all the new features.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Amazon is a dog friendly company and therefore everyone brings their dogs to work. It’s always super fun seeing dogs in your cubicle and playing with them. In addition, I really enjoyed what I was working on since it relates to both of my majors. I also felt that I was actually making a change and improving the way consumers experience books.

What was challenging about your internship?
For me, the most challenging part was setting up the environment and getting used to the Amazon internal system.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: March  
Accepted by: April

My advice is definitely to go back and review all the data structures. Also, look online for some common technical interview questions.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship? While my background in UX and my strong portfolio helped to get the internship, I think my communication skills were the most important factor in getting an offer. It’s really important to be able to communicate well in interviews and show that you are enthusiastic and excited about the opportunity, whatever it might be.

What are the steps you took to land your internship? I was fortunate enough to have someone recommend me for the position, which meant that I had two rounds of interviews before receiving my offer. The first interview was with the HR manager and the second interview was with a designer who ended up becoming my manager. A few weeks after these interviews, I received my offer letter.

What did you do as an intern at Apple? I worked both by myself as well as with full-time employees to interview and observe stakeholders and users, research and evaluate solutions, and design network-related software for use within Apple.

What did you enjoy about your internship? I really enjoyed how much ownership I had over my project. I have had the opportunity to learn a lot more than I might have otherwise and made a ton of really good connections along the way.

What was challenging about your internship? The most challenging part for me was scoping my project and determining what would be a reasonable chunk to do over the summer. It took a lot of high level thinking to synthesize my research and define the problem in a concrete and achievable way.

INSIDER TIPS

Applied by: September  
Accepted by: October

Leveraging relationships and connections is hugely important in this field. It gives you credibility with the company and almost always gets you past a first round of interviews. It’s also important to be yourself and to not be hesitant to take advantage of opportunities in a field that you may not know a whole lot about. Internships are supposed to be learning experiences so don’t let tech companies fool you into thinking that you already need to know everything going into it.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I had some experience from my internship last summer, as well as through my courses, that were geared toward the work at Evernote.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I went to the TOC and started emailing recruiters early.

What did you do as an intern at Evernote?
I wrote automated tests for the Evernote iOS client and developed a prototype for an Evernote widget.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I really enjoyed the culture of the company. I think Evernote was a great size -- small enough that I could easily reach out to everyone, but big enough where I could feel the impact the company was making.

What was challenging about your internship?
In the first couple of days and weeks, it was easy to feel overwhelmed by the talent of the other workers; however, once I was on boarded and acclimated it was a lot more enjoyable.

I think if you have a passion for technology, companies will recognize that -- especially at smaller companies and start-ups.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Programming and critical thinking skills were critical. You don’t need advanced coding skills for the interview, having 15-112 and/or 15-122 was sufficient.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I went to the job fair.

What did you do as an intern at Facebook?
I was on the data team and coded. Interns have basically the same responsibilities as employees, but you have an assigned mentor who helps you out a lot.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed working to solve interesting problems, an enthusiastic team and great coworkers, and also the unlimited free food all day.

What was challenging about your internship?
The problems you are given are often challenging to solve. I think the most challenging thing is absorbing the huge code base. There is a lot of information you have no way of knowing coming into the internship. However everyone was really helpful.

DEANNA DALY, DC ‘16
LOGIC AND COMPUTATION / COMPUTER SCIENCE
Software Engineer, Summer 2015
Hometown: Essex Fells, NJ
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
Outside of the skills typically expected from a designer (such as product thinking, and interaction and visual design) it helped that I was good at thinking out loud. During the portfolio review part of the interview I was able to articulate my thought process behind each design decision. Being a good communicator is important because design is all about collaboration.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
During the previous summer, I designed and coded my own portfolio. I applied on TartanTrak in September and went through two rounds of interviews. I also went to Groupon’s design talk at CMU the night before my first interview to hear more about the culture at Groupon.

What did you do as a product design intern at Groupon?
I got to do a variety of things as a design intern. Some days I would be sketching storyboards for user research before switching to prototyping mobile interactions with Framer.js or Origami. Other days I would be creating task flows for new features on Sketch 3 or animating a loading transition on Adobe After Effects.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I think above anything else I really liked the people. The design team at Groupon consisted of a lot of very skilled and experienced people so I was able to learn a lot from them on everything from animation, prototyping, to be a leader as a designer. I also got to work on projects that were both meaningful and open ended, so I was able to really exercise my creativity as well as take ownership of the design.

What was challenging about your internship?
12 weeks is really not a long time. It takes time to get to know the context of the products, how the company operates, as well as the people there. You really have to be observant as an intern to pick up these things as fast as you can.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: September  
Accepted by: November

I came into the field of design with practically zero experience in any form of art or design before college. Although not exactly an insider tip, I do hope that people who find design interesting but have no prior experience know that it is possible to start and get internships in this field during college.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I would say that it was my discussion of my writing, research, and design process as well as written and visual evidence of that process and my ability to clearly articulate it that were ultimately most beneficial.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
In addition to my resume, I needed a portfolio (I used my personal website) to house information about my research, writing, and design work. I put that together during the fall. I talked to Target at the EOC in the spring and had a couple of interviews before I was offered the position.

What did you do as an intern at Target?
I worked directly with the UX research manager to write and conduct usability tests. I worked with my mentor one on one and with his team. He was primarily an information architect and user interface designer so I worked with him on developing a way to test a new concept he had developed. I also worked with two UX design interns to develop, design, test several prototypes for the adaptive site.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed the flexibility combined with the workload. They gave me a lot of work to do because I fear boredom and kept asking for different projects. That meant that I got to work in every area (minus development) on the UX floor and wasn’t confined to a specific daily routine.

What was challenging about your internship?
The internship itself was challenging (in a good way), but the most difficult (and at times frustrating) part was working with the design interns. They were really good at visual design and were in a program that focused a lot on building skills in visual design, but their program was less holistic than HCI. They thought differently than I did and were really focused on the product, the final thing we were building towards. However, this was a nice challenge and highlighted the differences between working in groups in school and in the wild.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
The experience in web development from the classes that I have taken at CMU helped me to secure
this position because it gave the employers confidence that I was fit for the job.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
In order to obtain my internship, I had to reach out to the company via email, have a phone interview
with some of the employees, and come in for a in person interview with the owners of the company.

What did you do as an intern at TerrAvion?
The company has a main web application that its customers interact with, and my main responsibility
was to work on and to improve the app. Since the company is very small (~20 employees), I was able
to take on large projects that made serious contributions to the web application.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I really enjoyed the fact that the company was so small. Everyday I would interact with the CEO and
CTO (either by having lunch together or working on projects together). Additionally, it was amazing
to get to know everyone in the business and how each person contributes to the company’s success.

What was challenging about your internship?
My internship consisted of my doing many projects. Some of the projects were difficult because I was
not knowledgeable enough to figure it out, but thankfully the rest of the staff was very helpful and
always there to teach me new concepts and help me solve difficult problems.

I was able to confidently reach out to this company because I knew someone
who worked in association with them, and this person knew my skills and
experience and helped me to connect. My advice, for this industry, would be
to make relationships with people at every opportunity that you have because
those people can help you a lot when finding or applying to a job.
What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I had applied for another internship with a different department at the Institution, but they suggested that with all of the journalistic experience that I had, a position at the newspaper might be better suited for me. I told them I would think about it, but then a day later, I got a call from the editor of the paper, who interviewed me and then offered me the job. It was all very fortuitous!

What did you do as an intern at the Chautauquan Daily?
I was in charge of compiling the program pages, which put together a comprehensive listing of all of the events that happened on the grounds, the Briefly column, which involved writing listings for organizations around the grounds that have events, writing brief articles for organizations to announce the speakers or programs of the week, compiling and sorting letters to the editor, and serving as the community liaison.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I loved working with the people at The Chautauquan Daily. They are so smart and interesting, and being able to hear where people are at different points in their life was so interesting to me. It was great to work with people inspired me to do better and challenge my thinking. I also loved being at the center of such an engaged community. It’s incredible to have such high readership in this day and age, and it really changes the way that you put together a newspaper.

What was challenging about your internship?
Getting used to a new schedule of deadlines and being thrown into the season was intense, but once everything got into a rhythm, it was no problem.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My writing classes prepared me for the writing exam and gave me plenty of projects to talk about in the interviews. Having some experience with DITA authoring tools (from Software Documentation) was a huge advantage as well.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
Informatica posted on TartanTrak and I applied online. A month later, I got a call from their recruiter and had a short, informal interview. Later I had more formal phone interviews with several managers. I answered a short essay prompt and took a writing exam that focused primarily on concision and clarity. The whole process required patience: it took about four months.

What did you do as a technical writing intern at Informatica?
I ended up working on larger writing features along with some smaller projects. I wrote two “how to” articles that were published to the company’s online help page, and also documented a new feature for their next release this fall. The smaller projects included everything from testing command line functionality to updating an entire guide book with a new user interface title.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Everyone that I worked with was friendly and helpful, even if their help was in the form of life lessons and job searching tips. I loved that the technical writers were treated as part of the research and development team, not just a separate project group. Plus, the internship program itself had plenty of perks. The interns went to a Giants game, attended talks from the CEO and CMO, and even went on a boat cruise on San Francisco Bay.

What was challenging about your internship?
Managing multiple projects was challenging in such a new environment. Because there were two major releases coming up, the documentation team was very busy, and the pace of work was quick. Overall, though, CMU prepared me for a heavy workload.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: January  
Accepted by: April

Know about DITA! It came up in every interview I had (or I made it come up in every interview I had). Also be prepared with personal examples of team projects; technical writing requires constant communication and working with others.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I am familiar with the standards of technical writing in a software context. I also have strong communication skills which I accumulated from taking courses like Topics in Rhetoric: Argument and creative writing workshops.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I used my classmates as a resource. I got some interviews because my classmates reached out to recruiters from previous internships for me. I also spruced up my résumé and brought it to all of the career fairs I attended.

What did you do as an intern at Medidata?
I helped Medidata transfer old user assistance into a new knowledge platform called Confluence. I also authored assistance for new modules in Rave, Medidata’s main product. Since Rave had a new release right before my internship began, there was a lot of work to do. In between projects I copy edited articles written by other team members.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
Everyone at Medidata was so pumped to have an intern working on their projects. Everyone wanted to tell me about what they do, and how I could help them streamline their process. I learned a lot!

What was challenging about your internship?
There’s a lot of responsibility. They expected me to know what I was doing when it came to writing, and assigned me to projects that would meet an end user in just a few weeks. I had to work hard to satisfy the high standards of the company and crank my deliverables out on time.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: March   Accepted by: April

If you want to get into technical writing, it’s important that you know the mindset and jargon of the trade. Knowing how to author in DITA, or what single sourcing is, really impressed the teams I spoke with and definitely boosted me to the next round of interviews. Medidata’s president went to Carnegie Mellon, and the company recruits heavily from CMU. If you want to work for Medidata, go to their booth at the career fairs. The recruiters want to talk to you and will get your interview process going right away!
Salesforce
San Francisco, CA | www.salesforce.com

BRIAN TRIMBOLI, DC ‘16
TECHNICAL WRITING & COMMUNICATION / ENGLISH

Technical Writing Intern, Summer 2015
Hometown: Raritan, NJ

What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I had two summers’ worth of experience as a technical writer at other, smaller tech companies, and leveraged the skills I had learned during those internships when I interviewed with Salesforce. I used the skills I learned in my professional and technical writing classes, and the leadership and writing experience I gained as long-time News Editor of The Tartan. I also leveraged programming skills and knowledge from several computer science classes that I took my freshman and sophomore years.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I interviewed with a technical writing manager from Salesforce early in the fall semester when he came to Carnegie Mellon during the TOC. After that I had one more interview with another manager, and a few weeks later received notice that I had received the job.

What did you do as an intern at Salesforce?
I spent my summer writing a module for an interactive online tutorial that teaches Salesforce’s clients how to use the company’s customer relations management platform. I wrote easy-to-use instructions for complex business-to-business software.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
At Salesforce I felt like a full-time employee, even though I was only there for 12 weeks. I worked on a project of which I saw the results at the end of the summer, and created documentation that had a measurable impact on Salesforce’s clients and customers. I also loved spending the summer in San Francisco; I spent much of my free time exploring the city and taking advantage of its diverse social scene.

What was challenging about your internship?
Because they take interns seriously at Salesforce, ramping up and getting used to the work environment in the beginning of the summer was fast-paced and sometimes challenging.

INSIDER TIPS
Applied by: September  | Accepted by: October
Salesforce’s documentation team visits Carnegie Mellon yearly to recruit directly from our technical and professional writing program because they’ve had great experiences with past interns. Although experience isn’t necessary, Salesforce appreciates writers with past internship experience, and taking skill-based classes like Software Documentation and Introduction to Professional and Technical Writing is a huge help. Although I am primarily a writer, my background in computer science and technology has also been useful in finding internships.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My study abroad experience gave me a strong language and cultural background in Simplified and Traditional Chinese, which is a big advantage in the transcreation field.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I had learned about this internship opportunity during my sophomore year after meeting a CMU alumna at the Dietrich Under Construction event. I unfortunately did not get the position when I applied last year, but I followed up this past spring with the alumna to see if the position was open this summer. Luckily it was and I was able to land the position after sending in another application with my resume and cover letter.

What did you do as an intern at the Tag Worldwide?
Understand job cycle (booking jobs, sending jobs on approval, review job flow, release jobs/files), provide support to coworkers, write creative briefs, perform quality control, place jobs with copywriters and linguists, create internal workflow documents and cost estimates, client communications, demonstrate initiative and provide support on project management.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I had a very thorough introductory phase to become familiar with the work that was being done in the team and the greater company as a whole. I was also given many opportunities to learn about the different positions that were present inside and outside of my team through career panels, credential presentations, among other company events. I was glad that I was able to work on projects that actually went out to clients and that I was making significant contributions to my team and their clients.

What was challenging about your internship?
Every project that I worked on had a specific process and a specific format. It was challenging to make sure that I was doing everything right. I had to ask a lot of questions and try many times until I could get things perfect.

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Definitely get in touch with the right people! I found the Dietrich Under Construction event very helpful in meeting alumni who work in fields that interest me. They’ll really speed up the process for you if you make a good impression. It is also very helpful to have had a previous internship opportunity. If it’s your first year finding one, don’t be scared. Just put yourself out there and be eager to learn!
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
I had experience working with Adobe Creative Suite and managing a small staff on the Tartan. Written and oral communication skills helped too.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
I worked on my cover letter and resume with Necia Werner and submitted it via email. A week before acceptances were sent out, the Director of Publishing Operations contacted me for a short phone interview. During the interview, we focused mainly on my resume and discussed some of the more specific responsibilities of the internship. A couple days later my interviewer emailed me with a formal offer for the position.

What did you do as an intern at Yale University Press?
I handled a lot of frontlist and backlist orders and checked book proofs. Since I was also an intern for the Design department, I designed book covers and jackets. I attended pre-production meetings and book launches.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I learned a lot about publishing in general. Even though interns technically only work for one department, Yale Press gave me opportunities to go and see what other departments — such as Manuscript Editorial, Acquisitions Editorial, Marketing, etc. — were up to. Everyone there knew a lot about the industry and had prior experiences at other publishers such as (Penguin) Random House and HarperCollins, and were able to share those experiences with me. It was also cool to see and hear about upcoming titles before they were even published.

What was challenging about your internship?
Because everything was on a deadline, work piled up quickly. Occasionally I would have some downtime. Other times, I could be working on two book covers at once, only to be handed several purchase orders and invoices that needed to be done as soon as possible. There was also a lot of new software and information I had to learn quickly at the beginning of the internship.

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It helps to know a little bit about print publishing beforehand, but this also depends on what you want to do with publishing. Figure out what your strengths and skills are and gain some experience to show publishers that you know what you’re doing. There are many majors that can qualify for the position, but they look specifically for strong writing and communication backgrounds.
What skills do you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?
My skills in self-marketing and document design were crucial in helping me secure my internship. I was able to create an informative and visually interesting résumé, as well as write a short and precise cover letter. Clear readability and professionalism in writing are always assets in job applications, especially in the field of writing/editing and design.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?
Firstly, I took time to think about what kind of internship I wanted, and what kind of working experience I wanted to gain from the short summer months. When I decided that I wanted to work abroad at an internship in the field of editing, writing and design, I applied to Connect-123, a program that specializes in helping students locate internships abroad. After I had committed to the program, I submitted my résumé, cover letter and online writing and art portfolio, which were relayed to multiple companies in Ireland. Finally, I was offered a position as junior editor at Easy Food Magazine, and I happily accepted the position after reading the job description.

What did you do as an intern at Zahra Publishing Group?
My responsibilities included assisting the Deputy Editor in writing and editing recipes and web features, and designing weekly ads and online marketing material. I also assisted the food stylist and photographer in photo shoots and recipe testing.

What did you enjoy about your internship?
I enjoyed learning about the inner workings of a magazine company, and getting to know my coworkers. I also appreciated the experience of being in Ireland. Lastly, I loved helping out our food stylist and sampling the gourmet meals that she prepared for photo shoots.

What was challenging about your internship?
At times, I was assigned to tasks that I had little to no experience in, like helping with food preparation and recipe writing. By nature, the internship also demanded a level of self-sufficiency and independence from me.

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It’s extremely important to do plenty of research on a company before deciding to apply. It is imperative for an applicant to be able to talk about how he/she can help the company reach its objectives in relation to his/her own past work and academic experiences. It would also be a good idea to set up an organized written portfolio that highlights your best work, because it can both impress the employer and give him an insight to the kind of writing you’re passionate about.

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