Summer Internship Student Panel for Parents

Students in the panel, which took place during family weekend Oct. 12th, 2018, were asked to reflect on their summer internship and provide information that would be useful to both students and parents in preparing for a successful internship search.

Mellon College of Science
Research Intern at Aachen University, Laboratory for Machine Tools and Production Engineering

College of Fine Arts
3D Environmental Designer at Jack Morton Worldwide

School of Computer Science
Software Development Engineer Intern at Amazon

Carnegie Institute of Technology (Engineering)
Quality Intern at Merck & Co.

Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Summer Intern at National Institute of Health
Policy & Evaluation Intern at Dept. of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Tepper School of Business
Technology Consulting at PwC
Research Intern, WZL RWTH Aachen University - Aachen, Germany

Major: Mathematical Sciences (Statistics)

Description: This is a paid internship on data analysis. Under the guidance of my supervisor, I did extensive literature research, analyzed portfolio data from a mid-sized German company and implemented neural networks to help company decision-making processes within portfolio management. At the end of the internship, I wrote a conference paper which is going through publication process right now.

How did you find your internship?

I found it through DAAD which is a website that connects North American students with German institutes.

How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?

I would say less than 50. I didn't apply for as many opportunities as I wanted to because of workload during the semesters.

What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?

Networking was not required prior to applying for this internship but students do need to maintain good relationships with university faculty members since at least one recommendation letter was required for the application process. During the internship, I did regular company on-site visits, so networking with the client company was required through in-person meetings and phone conferences.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

This internship on data analysis and implementation of neural network is exactly what I want to pursue for my future academic and professional career. I got hands-on experience on how to handle real-world data sets which is very beneficial for my upcoming graduate school applications and future job interviews.

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

I guess for my next internship, I would probably want a position where I can get more help from my supervisors or team members. During this summer research internship, I was the only one on the team who was able to learn and actually implement the neural networks. This provided me with a lot of learning opportunities but also created a lot of stress for me simply because I couldn't ask anyone for help when I encountered certain coding questions.

What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?

Trust that students know what they are doing and don't put too much pressure on them. Also if there are potential family connections that parents can share with their children, make sure that
students can utilize these unique family connections and network with whoever will potentially be able to help them in the future.

Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?

Networking is an essential part of getting any kind of internships or future opportunities. Students should know that networking doesn't only apply to company recruiters. Professors, peers, parents, family friends are all good and important sources of networks that students should establish. Maintaining and leveraging those networks is also an essential part.
3D Environmental Designer, Jack Morton Worldwide - San Francisco, CA

**Major:** Architecture

**Description:** At the brand experience agency, I was a paid intern (SF minimum wage), primarily working with the creative team to help ideate, iterate, and produce design work for current and future clients, which were mostly large tech companies, given this office was in the Bay Area. The intern program also had a specific intern project to work on so I worked on 3D renders and graphics at the same time and helped deliver our final pitch along with the team of 8 other interns. Most of my work revolved around contributing to the creative section of project pitch decks to company leadership and real world clients.

**How did you find your internship?**

I found my internship through extensive online searching. This included googling specific job title keywords and then using LinkedIn... a lot.

**How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?**

120

**What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?**

Networking played a huge role in acquiring my internship. I recommend using LinkedIn to find alumni to connect with. Over my search, I connected with over 10 Carnegie Mellon Alumni of all levels of experience and not from my major. An alumna, who ended up becoming a great mentor over the summer, directed me to the manager of the internship position I was seeking. She helped set up a conference phone interview directly and also put me in touch with the Hiring Manager.

**How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?**

This internship gave me a better sense of an industry that I previously had no knowledge about — advertising, but in non-traditional forms. Throughout the internship I gained both soft and hard skills, which provided me with so much insight as to what I might like and dislike for a future creative position. It also introduced me to other companies (under the agency's parent company, IPG) and different types of positions I'm currently really inspired by. I think I'm also more open to embracing an entrepreneurial mindset while still working for a big company or larger organization. Location also played a huge part of influencing my thoughts about my future. I'm more interested in looking for international positions now too because of the successful global relationships that I saw this agency have with their own offices and with clients in general. Overall, it was challenging and inspiring in ways that I couldn't have imagined prior to becoming a part of the intern program. I'm optimistic that my *junior summer* experience gave me a good foundation to do some big moves in the near future.

**Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?**
Even though it was only 2 months, I think I could have added more value to the company while I was there, so if I could go back, I'd take on more work that I was interested in, but too scared to ask for.

**What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?**

Timing is everything.

Depending on the hiring cycles and specific needs of the companies that your student might be looking for, you have to know when the student's intended industry tends to hire and what seasons the student wants to be applying/recruiting during. Starting earlier is generally better but you can always find something if you're willing to hustle hard enough. Some people I know accept offers in Oct/Nov and some in April. For technical and business majors, applications and interview rounds can happen as early as May or August... For creative majors it's going to vary a lot, but all of my interviews were in the spring, January - March. This was something I learned after 2 years of not knowing these things so I finally figured it out after continuously applying to over 120 internships from September - March, getting 6 interviews, and finally receiving 2 offers, and narrowing it down to 1 I really wanted to accept.

Encourage students to do a lot of research, be strategic, knowledgeable, and selective in how you approach the *internship game*, and definitely practice talking to people. Yes — to network, but also to learn more about how they, as students, can be of value to that company and to others. Creating a balance of give and take is something that I personally think the most successful people learn at some point. Parents, remind your students to give back and show gratitude to mentors and people who have helped along the way.

**Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?**

"It's never too late — never too late to start over, never too late to be happy." — Jane Fonda
Software Development Engineer Intern, Amazon - Seattle, WA

Major: Computer Science

Description: For the past two summers, I have had a paid internship with Amazon in Seattle as a software development engineer intern. I worked on full-stack iOS development and got the chance to work on a project that directly contributed to what my team was working on. It was a really great experience and I got to meet developers and interns from all kinds of backgrounds, as well as grow and develop my own skills in an industry setting.

How did you find your internship?

A recruiter reached out encouraging me to apply my freshman year, and after that internship I received a return offer for the next summer.

How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?

Around 30

What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?

I think networking played a really big role in my internship, as not only did I get to develop connections with the members of my team, but I also received the opportunity to meet with people from other teams and learn about their projects as well. Networking was highly encouraged since it gave us the chance to explore teams and projects that we're really passionate about and that we may want to work on in the future.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

I've learned that I really enjoy working on new products and the independence and ambiguity that comes with developing innovative solutions for these problems. I've discovered that I do want to go directly into industry after graduating, and I am so glad to have been able to continuously build my foundation for software development through my internships.

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

I wish I had scheduled more coffee chats and one-on-ones with the principle engineers and higher management on my team during my internship. The team I worked on this past summer was really unique in the sense that it was one of the only teams that had seven principle engineers and where everyone got to work closely with its upper managers and VP's. I think I could have taken advantage of this opportunity more, as I learned that managers really do enjoy mentoring and sharing their thoughts and experiences.

What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?

I would encourage parents to read over their student's resumes and cover letters, as well as share general interview tips or give mock interviews if possible. I think any general advice and
guidance would be beneficial to students, especially if they're just starting out with their internship search.

*Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?*

A lot of companies don't offer first-year internships, so definitely do not be discouraged if your student doesn't find an internship freshman year. There are tons of opportunities besides internships that help students build up experience and that companies will look for in subsequent years. However, definitely still encourage your student to apply everywhere they can, even if they think they're not qualified. Often times, even if the company is looking for older students, they might still hold on to freshman resumes that they think have potential and reach out the next year.
Quality Intern, Merck & Co. - West Point, PA

Major: Chemical Engineering and Engineering & Public Policy

Description: Paid internship in Laboratory Quality Assurance at the Merck Vaccine Manufacturing site. Focused on data analytics for the site Leadership Team to better allocate resources. Applied lean manufacturing and engineering principles to problem-solving.

How did you find your internship?
First I researched and applied to the Merck Internship position on Handshake. Then I spoke with recruiters at the career fair (TOC). Finally I was interviewed on-campus and offered a position.

How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?
40

What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?
For Chemical Engineers Merck, P&G, and ExxonMobil are the big recruiters. Networking with new hires and recruiters was critical in learning more about the company and getting to the interview phase.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?
It has shaped my immediate career goals. I have come to understand both the manufacturing and vaccine spaces. I also see what it is like to engage in a professional work setting.

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
Networking more and using the contacts/connections I had more. Applying to more positions.

What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?
Encourage students to explore potential alternative fields if the student wants to do so. Internships are a great chance to explore career options without too much investment. It is okay to have a local unpaid/regular job for the summer. The most important thing is to do something for the summer.

Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?
Make use of the career center and all the great resources available on campus. Tuition goes to cover many opportunities here at CMU, but you have to go out and seek them.
**Summer Intern**, National Institute of Health - Bethesda, Maryland

**Major:** Psychology

**Description:** Current methods of measuring dopamine are extremely expensive therefore I created an image processing program that counted number of eye blinks to analyze whether eye blinks was directly correlated with dopamine which was measured through PET.

**How did you find your internship?**
Was mentioned in my psychology class by the TA.

**How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?**
20

**What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?**
Networking with other interns gave me references on where else I could work next summer

**How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?**
Gave me a better idea of whether I would want to do research or not in the future.

**Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?**
I wish I had done more research into labs while applying. It is extremely important to show interest through your research.

**What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?**
Encourage them to apply for clubs, many recruiters show up to clubs such as roboclub or email clubs about opportunities they have.

**Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?**
Make sure they find something they're truly interested in exploring, the most important part of college is exploring what your interests are.
Technology Consulting, PwC - San Francisco, California

Major: Business Administration & Statistics

Description: (Paid) Overall, the client engagement I was staffed on involved supporting a $70B+ integrated healthcare system transition of regional HR data management processes to a centralized cloud over 2-3 years. Specifically, I conducted working sessions with 45+ HR leads around the nation to identify gaps in current state data management between the 7 regions to optimize the eventual, centralized data dashboards. I ranked regions on readiness to transition to centralized platform based on multiple factors, and that information was used to further the engagement after my summer was over.

How did you find your internship?

I found my internship through PwC's accelerated recruiting program for non-diversity sophomores. PwC attended Jumpstart in the winter, the career fair designed for just freshmen and sophomores, where I learned more about the program and eventually applied for it on Handshake.

How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?

60-80

What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?

Networking was a big factor, especially in a business role. For months prior to applying I connected with multiple CMU PwC alumni, who provided me with detailed insight into what it was like working at PwC. This information helped me greatly during the interview process as I was able to point to concrete experiences when expressing my desire to work at PwC. Networking was also incredibly important during my internship, as I was able to navigate my way out of technology consulting and into the M&A management consulting group that I really wanted to be in. Throughout my 2-3 months I'd constantly be reaching out and having phone conversations with other PwC folk in the M&A group, and having these relationships were the sole reason I was granted my request to switch groups.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

Consulting is a mystifying career since it is so broad, but having the summer experience in it really taught me the ins-and-outs and solidified my desire to work full-time in consulting. Prior to the internship I was still unsure if consulting was the path I wanted to be in, and I had already started networking with non-consulting firms to prepare for full-time recruitment. By the end of the internship though, I realized consulting was where I wanted to be.

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
I wish that as a freshman I had reached out to more upperclassmen to learn about their own internship experiences. Upperclassmen are a freshman's best resource to learning about potential career paths.

**What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?**

Encourage your child to keep an open mind when exploring career paths! The best part about CMU is its interdisciplinary nature - I know business majors who work in software engineering and computer science majors who work in consulting. Your major doesn't define your career path at a school at CMU, so keeping an open mind is key. My best piece of career advice for a freshman is to figure out what you want to do by figuring out what you don't want to do. By narrowing down your options over time you'll be able to make a more informed decision as a junior or senior.
Policy & Evaluation Intern, Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs – Washington, DC

Major: Decision Science, Russian Studies

Description: I received a fellowship through the Council of American Ambassadors to work as an unpaid intern in State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I worked in the Evaluation Division within the Policy office, where I evaluated survey data and survey methodologies from multiple state-funded exchange programs. I also worked to inform the Assistant Secretary for various meetings, speeches and introductions.

How did you find your internship?

I applied to my internship with the State Department on USAJobs, and was recommended the position by a then-intern at the State Department who was my classmate while I was enrolled in the Washington Semester Program.

How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?

Prior to Summer 2018, I had submitted about 12 applications.

What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?

Networking did not play a large role in receiving a conditional offer, but it played a large role during my time at the State Department. A massive benefit of interning with State came in the form of open and friendly civil service and foreign service officers willing to talk to me about my future career. They not only were informative and insightful, but willing and enthusiastic to hear about what I had to say, what my interests were, and how I could get there. I hope to keep in touch with my co-workers and other State contacts for years to come.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

This internship helped confirm my desire to work in the foreign policy apparatus of the US government. Regardless of administration, I felt that working analytically within the government abroad would help marry my diverse academic interests and contribute to something larger than myself. Later in my career, I hope to become a foreign service officer.

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

I wish I had realized the value of my position sooner in the summer. I was originally stressed about my clearance status and the clearance process, and concerned that I would be too busy to perform well. Instead, I realized that I could take on more complicated tasks and connect with more senior State employees than I had anticipated.

What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?

Parents should encourage students to apply for as many internships as possible. Allow your child to determine their interests with as little guidance as possible. If feasible, connect them with
friends or relatives with careers related to your child's interests or in the agencies that pique your child's curiosities. If the choice narrows to an internship that would be lucrative vs. an internship more aligned with your child's career goals, choose the latter if possible.

Is there anything else that you think is important for parents to know that we have not covered this discussion?

It will work out! If applying to internships in the federal government or in DC, do not feel afraid to follow up if you haven't heard anything in a while; these are large bureaucracies that require the occasional reminder that you exist. Do not be discouraged if many applications are submitted without response; simply keep trying, and lean on CMU's resources for help. These resources include the undergraduate internship grant, the career offices, resume reviews, and mock interviews. These people are here to help.