Summer Internship Student Panel for Parents

Students in the panel, which took place during family weekend Oct. 12th, 2019, 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 (Mathematical Sciences)
Business Analyst Intern at Grant Street Group

College of Fine Arts (Dramatrugy)
German Language Learning at Goethe Institute

School of Computer Science
Student Engineer at Boeing

Carnegie Institute of Technology (Civil Engineering)
Project Engineer at WindAid Institute

Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences (Ethics, History, and Public Policy)
MS4 Intern at Allegheny Land Trust

Tepper School of Business (Business Administration)
Investment Banking Summer Analyst at Oberon Securities

Business Analyst Intern at Grant Street Group, Pittsburgh PA
Major: Mathematical Sciences (Operational Research/Statistics Concentration)

Description: My internship was a 12-week paid internship for a company based in Pittsburgh that creates software for tax collection and government-related online payments. I was partnered with a software developer intern, and we spent the summer working on different aspects of the same project. At the end of the summer, we pitched the prototype to the government clients at a week-long User Group Meeting in Orlando to gauge client interest and estimate service cost.

How did you find your internship?

I learned about Grant Street Group when I went to a career fair during my freshman year. The recruiter that I talked to was extremely kind and wanted to get to know me as an individual to personalize their talk about the company and the different positions offered. I ended up favoriting the company on Handshake, so when the time came to apply to internships during my sophomore year, their position came to the top of my Handshake account.

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

30

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

When I was interviewing with Grant Street Group, the recruiter knew right away that I visited their booth at a prior career fair. To the company, this showed my interest in them, which strengthened my application.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

While I did enjoy my internship, I wish that my job let me use more of my technical and quantitative problem-solving skills. I learned that I prefer positions such as data analytics over business development.

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

I wish I took the initiative not only to learn more about other departments in the company but also participate in side-projects with these departments. Doing new projects may have helped me gain a better understanding of my ideal job in the future and further improve my technical skills.

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

Be supportive of your student throughout the whole internship and job search process, and encourage your student to find jobs that are a good fit for them based on their interests and experiences. I know of students who feel pressured to work at larger companies even as a first-year because their parents expect them to, and it ends up putting unnecessary stress on the student.
German Language Learning at Goethe Institute, Berlin, Germany

**Major:** Dramaturgy

**Description:** The Goethe Institut is a global German learning school recognized among many universities. The German learning course I anticipated included was a 6-week long stay in Berlin with a host family as well as 6 hours of German language learning every day.

**How did you find your internship?**

I spoke with the Office of International Education about my interest in accelerating my language classes within my major requirement in order to prepare for my intended study abroad junior year. They were super helpful with going through program options as well as funding options that CMU could support me with in my endeavor.

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

Last year, as a first year, I was more focused on an experiential summer, so I applied to ~3 internships. Now heading into next summer, I am already preparing ~10 applications at the moment.

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

For this internship in particular, my established relationship with the Office of International Education was super helpful. However, I also worked for The New Group Theater Company in New York this past summer. They were a company I had worked with before previously and maintaining my relationship with them while in college was extremely important. Consistency is the key to long lasting connections.

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

Going to Berlin opened the world to me. In my time there I was able to travel to Amsterdam and Prague. Experiencing theater in these culturally rich locations expanded my conception of what the theater could be. I think experiencing one's field abroad is a truly enriching process that is worth being pursued while in college.

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

I wish I had planned my summer out more strategically. I went to Germany for 6 weeks, worked with the New Group for a month, and did an independent theatre project in Athens for two weeks. I did not take enough time beforehand to process the brevity of all of those experiences as well as the brevity of time I had at home. This left me with a lot of things left to do and no time to do them, so I would recommend regardless of the summer experience, plan out how you want to use your time before its gone.

**What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?**
Remind your student to focus on what they are interested in and what their individual passions are. In college, it can get a little difficult to remember that big names aren't the goal, but rather, experiences you find fruitful and can utilize in the professional world.

**Student Engineer** at Boeing, St. Louis, MO

**Major:** Computer Science

**Description:** I worked at Boeing (paid) on an in-house web application used for managing part orders. I was working with 3 other software engineers, though the team was around 12 people in size, so while they were not working on the same project as me, I had a lot of people to seek help from. It was an agile team, so I was given a few tasks every two weeks, and we had biweekly check-in meetings to discuss things we were working on and what we needed help with.

*How did you find your internship?*

Through Handshake.

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

I have applied to too many to keep count.

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

During my internship, my manager helped me reach out to managers of other teams at Boeing to set up a time for them to give me a tour and/or tell me about their team and what they do. It was a great experience, and I think, alone as an intern, it definitely wouldn't have been possible.

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

I think I like software development a lot more than I gave credit for before this internship. It was nice to get to experience a real workplace environment and actually be a part of a team working on something that would be utilized.

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

I wish I had been more comfortable interacting with my coworkers. It took about a month for me to really warm up to the idea of reaching out and talking to people, but by then the internship was already half-way over. I know making connections is a really important part of any job or internship, so getting used to reaching out to people is something I have to get used to.

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

I think a definite help would be looking over your child's resume or helping them practice their elevator pitch. It can be nerve-wracking the first couple of times, so better they practice with you
than with recruiters. And always keep encouraging them to apply, even if it seems like they've already applied to every internship out there.

**Project Engineer** at WindAid Institute, Trujillo, Peru

**Major:** Civil & Environmental Engineering; 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.

**MS4 Intern** at Allegheny Land Trust, Pittsburgh, PA

**Major:** Ethics, History, and Public Policy

**Description:** Unpaid (stipend from Pittsburgh Summer Internship Program)
I did research for ALT on the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) to start their water conservation educational program. The goal of MS4 is to reduce pollution and waste that's going into the watersheds, which is particularly important in Pittsburgh due to its location at the junctions of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers. Most municipalities in Allegheny County have to meet certain education and public involvement requirements and I was asked to do research and contact different municipalities to foster relationships between them and ALT and start up this program.

**How did you find your internship?**
I found my internship through the Pittsburgh Summer Internship Program that's run through Dietrich College.

**How many internship applications have you submitted during your time at CMU?**
~10-15. I was quite picky when I was choosing what internships to apply for. Freshman year, I didn't apply at all. Sophomore year, I applied to a handful but I was transitioning into a different major and knew that I would have to take summer classes to catch up a little. The bulk of the applications were sent out when I was searching for jobs for summer 2019.

**What role, if any, did networking play in acquiring your internship?**
I didn't know anything about the company before working for them. I'm glad the Internship Program was there to connect me with them.

**How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?**
While I confirmed that I do want to stay in the environmental field in one way or another, I also learned that there's some aspects of the field that I don't enjoy. I think moving forward I'll be more cognizant of what the positions I'm applying for are asking me to do.

**Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?**
I would've looked for more opportunities outside of the internship program. I was banking on the hope that I would get a position from at least one of the places I applied to, but I was getting a little worried as the couple of weeks companies had to contact students was coming up.
What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?

Parents should figure out how involved they can be with their kids. I think outright finding a position for them doesn't help with personal growth, but I also think that being completely hands off sets the kid up for more struggles than they needed to see. Every parent should figure out what works with their kids, whether they just want general advice or more rigid guidance throughout the job search process.

Investment Banking Summer Analyst at Oberon Securities, New York, NY

Major: Business Administration

Description: This program helps interns develop proficiency and participate in many aspects of financial transactions such as mergers and acquisitions, private placements of debt and equity and more. Interns have the opportunity to learn from many members of the Oberon team including managing directors, vice presidents, associates and analysts, in an open atmosphere where ideas are continuously shared and creative thinking and individual initiative are encouraged. Although this was an unpaid internship, interns can leverage this experience to explore the investment banking industry.

How did you find your internship?

I obtained my internship by networking with a fraternity brother’s dad who is a Managing Director at Oberon Securities. After speaking with him on the phone, I went through the recruiting process at the firm which included a resume drop and interview.

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

During the previous summer, I submitted about 150 internship applications.

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

Networking played an important role in acquiring my internship since I would not have found out about the internship opportunity unless I leveraged my network. It was also very helpful having someone vouching for me during the recruiting process and internship experience.

How did this internship influence your outlook on your future?

This internship confirmed my interest in a career in investment banking and gave me exposure to some of the responsibilities that an analyst takes on such as market research and valuation work.

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

One thing I wish I did differently was to leverage my network earlier so that I would not have needed to submit so many internship applications.

What advice do you have for parents with students engaging in an internship?
My best advice is for parents is to stay supportive of their kids while searching for internships because the odds aren’t great for applying to internships and there is so much help that you can provide, both tangible and intangible.