

On-the-Job Experience:

Elevating Internships

Through the competitive internship awards program, more Hollins women than ever will be able to undertake a career-building—and sometimes life-changing—experience. **BY JEFF HODGES**

Previously, many Hollins students who wanted to take advantage of the university's internship opportunities during Short Term faced an imposing hurdle: finding the resources to cover housing, food, and other essential expenses, particularly in major cities, where the cost of living can be astronomical. These students were often left with the choice of living on campus and pursuing promising but limited options in Roanoke, or staying in their hometown, where even fewer internship opportunities might be available.

But thanks to the generosity of Hebe Sanders Dowling '64 and her passionate belief in the importance of career preparation through hands-on experience, students now enjoy greater access to on-the-job training through the competitive internship awards program, launched in January 2008.

"We have had a great internship program at Hollins for many years, but the number of students able to take advantage of it was dropping," says

Tina Rolen, director of the Career Center. "We had more and more students saying, 'I wish I could have done an internship but I couldn't afford it.' It's very important that we have some means of supporting them, and the competitive internship awards program allows Hollins to offer housing and a stipend for living expenses on an unprecedented scale."

Under the program, students apply for selected internships in locations along the Eastern Seaboard, the majority of which are sponsored by Hollins alumnae. Students are asked to present a resume, letters of recommendation, and a statement of purpose. The sponsors themselves made the final selection.

This January, twenty students entered the program. Without exception, they reported gaining invaluable experience; their sponsors, thirteen of whom are alumnae, noted that the Hollins students made important contributions to their businesses and organizations. In some cases, they overshadowed interns from other universities with their professionalism and performance.

New York

Shannan Staples '08 and Radford Thomas '09 arrived at UBS Financial Services to find the financial markets "in total chaos," says sponsor Holly Hendrix '75. "I think it was a great learning experience for them."

Thomas agrees, adding that her internship "allowed me to make connections that will help me in the future, including getting a job after graduation. I learned a lot and was able to apply my classroom knowledge." Thomas and Staples immersed themselves in portfolio analysis and stock research and were introduced to the many aspects of working in financial services.

"The competitive internship program, in my opinion, is the best program I have participated in while at Hollins," Thomas says.

Christine Han '09 worked with the Bachmann-Strauss Dystonia and Parkinson Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to finding better treatments and cures for the two movement disorders.

"Christine was in charge of helping two thirteen-year-olds with a 'Clips for a Cure' campaign," says Helen Miller '77, her sponsor. "She put together a program to get volunteers in every state to help sell the [keychains] to raise money for our foundation."

"I couldn't believe that a project was given to me as soon as I got to the internship site," Han says. "I just couldn't stop thanking everyone." She also worked on researching corporations and sponsors to underwrite a golf invitational, the foundation's major fundraiser.

"Bachmann-Strauss is an amazing place to intern," says Han. "If the housing was not provided, I would not have had this experience. It reminds me how I should support Hollins when I graduate from school...I won't forget this."

Abbie Fisher '09 echoes Han's gratitude for having housing provided while she was in New York. Fisher summed up her internship with Sotheby's Department of Americana as "fantastic.



Christine Han '09 and Radford Thomas '09

I gained a strong understanding of working in an auction house as well as seeing how one works with art dealers and museums. I think the program is wonderful and I would love to see it continue."

Alison Ames '66 sponsored Fiona Zwieb '10 at 21C Media Group, a public relations firm that works with performers, composers, arts organizations and recording companies. Ames says that Zwieb "worked like a beaver" and had the opportunity to interact with such distinguished artists as Marin Alsop, music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the first woman to head a major American orchestra, and acclaimed Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andness.

Washington, D.C.



Amanda McGee '10



Elyse Stolpe '10

Web site maintenance and the AIDS Walk Africa Scholarship were just two of the projects Amanda McGee '10 undertook during her internship with the Elizabeth Glaser AIDS Foundation, which she found to be “a wonderful environment. It was good training for anyone interested in fundraising and seeing what makes a nonprofit organization tick.”

Sponsor Suzanne Mink '74 adds, “The foundation considers cultivating the next generation of advocates one of its most important tasks, and Amanda added intellectual fervor and insight to our youth philanthropy program. She was a wonderful addition to our staff and brought a fresh perspective.”

Elyse Stolpe '10 and Anya Work '10 were both immediately given significant duties when they began their internships with the U.S. Supreme Court's Office of the Curator, but sponsor Gwen Fernandez '06 says they “embraced the

daunting task with the grace and professionalism one would expect of Hollins women.”

Work quickly mastered the requirements for helping catalog the office's enormous collection of photographic records, while Stolpe embraced a variety of visitor services and public relations functions.

“I was thrilled with my internship,” Stolpe says. “What I loved most is that we were given so many important responsibilities. My public speaking and interpersonal skills continued to develop, and since I want to go to law school, the access to so many top lawyers was invaluable. Overall, every aspect of this internship helped me grow.”

At the U.S. International Trade Commission, Elizabeth Barnette '08 participated in international trade hearings, ethics meetings, and delivering case reviews and recommendations.

“The doors this has opened for

me have been invaluable. I now have a recommendation from a federal employer, I have contacts in Washington, and I have a better understanding of city life,” she explains.

Kasey Freedman Sporck '04 was motivated to sponsor Barnette in part because of her own “incredibly beneficial” J-Term experience. “Elizabeth quickly became a valuable member of our office team. The energy she displayed on a daily basis was contagious. She certainly raised the bar for our future interns.”

Virginia



Rachel Bandy '10

Photo by Travis Fullerton © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Hollins' Eleanor D. Wilson Museum enjoys a dynamic partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond; in January, the university enhanced its relationship with the VMFA through the internship of Rachel Bandy '10.

“Rachel did an excellent job for us,” says sponsor Robin Jones '82. “She helped us prepare for upcoming exhibits and assisted with maintaining

current lighting.”

Bandy adds, “I had a month-long project measuring the amounts of UV light that is hitting the art. UV light can damage works of art by causing them to fade, and in some cases, even rot. I learned a variety of things in a short period of time and the experience has shown me there is more to running a museum than I originally thought. I am very grateful for this opportunity.”

Laura Graves '10 interned at the Edgar Allen Poe Museum, also in Richmond. “Without the stipend or the provided housing it wouldn't have been possible,” the Ohio native says. “The set-up of the competitive internship program gave me a shot at internship possibilities outside the range of Roanoke and Columbus,” her hometown.

Graves says she engaged in a lot of hands-on activities, including space conversion for archives. She even made a major discovery.

“I found a letter by President

William Howard Taft to the museum in their attic that they didn't know they had. It was a marvelous experience.”

The arrival of Makayla Nash '09 at the Cooke Veterinary Medical Center in Chesapeake could not have been better timed: a staff member had just abruptly departed on early maternity leave. Makayla became “invaluable” according to veterinarian Erica Feiste '03.

“Makayla was a terrific asset in our practice and it was a pleasure to watch her technical skills improve and her confidence grow,” explains Feiste. “She displayed a wonderful aptitude for learning new tasks and quickly learned our practice routines. We wish we could have kept her forever.”



Laura Graves '10

North Carolina



Jennifer Eaton '09 "loved every minute" of her internship with UNC Press in Chapel Hill because she got the chance to follow the entire publishing process.

"The internship was really instrumental in helping me focus my career possibilities," she says. "This program has the extra bonus of placing current Hollins women in close proximity to the Hollins network where alumnae in powerful positions can provide a leg up in the 'real world.'"

Joanna Ruth Harris Marsland '91 sponsored Eaton's internship and says the benefits have been mutual. "Jenn quickly won my peers over and made a wonderful impression of Hollins with her ability and pleasant nature," she says, noting that Eaton put interns from a local flagship public university "to shame."

Brynn Hoffman '09 landed at the Preservation Society of Chapel Hill, an educational nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and restoring

historical structures. Florence Fowler Peacock '59 is a board member.

"We were very happy with Brynn," says Ernest Dollar, the society's executive director. "We tried to expose her to several different directions she could take career-wise in the historical field and she made a presentation of her work to our board of directors at the end of her internship. We are looking forward to having more interns from Hollins."

Betsy McSpadden Bennett '65 sponsored Katie Layman '09 at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, where Bennett serves as director of the largest natural history museum in the southeastern United States. Coordinator of Interns, Volunteers, and Technical Assistance Tullie Johnson was her direct supervisor, and says Layman gained exposure to the entire range of museum work through a variety of activities, including helping the museum's mammology curator do

a data inventory of whales in its collection. Layman studied gray whales during spring semester at Hollins.

"Katie was very cooperative and flexible and demonstrated a desire to learn as much as possible and seek out opportunities to contribute," says Johnson. "She is very enthusiastic and dependable in all she does, and it was a joy to have her at the museum."

Getting a clearer understanding of how arts councils work within their community was a focal point of Samantha Cole's ['09] internship with the Johnston County Arts Council in Clayton, North Carolina.

"Samantha worked on evaluating our arts in education program, created a Facebook page for the arts council, and helped on different marketing pieces," says sponsor Jessica Meadows '02, executive director.

Atlanta



The Make-a-Wish Foundation welcomed Julia Parker '10 to an internship that sponsor Shandy Arwood described as "extremely valuable. I think she gained insight into what it is like to work for a nonprofit and in determining if the nonprofit career is right for her. Our team really enjoyed having her here."

Diane Hall '88 of the Centers for Disease Control called intern Jenn Focht '09 "a wonderful fit with the people in our branch, and her interest and excitement for learning excited people here."

Hall says Focht gained tremendous exposure to the public health model

and also explored the different career options open to someone in her major, psychology.

"Having Jenn here, with her intelligence, great work ethic, sense of humor, organizational skills, and willingness to help, has also meant that particular research projects made a great leap forward to completion," she notes.

Megan Reigle '09 spent January with the Madison Gallery, an important venue in the Southeast for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European, British, and American oil paintings, watercolors, and sculptures.

"I greatly enjoyed my time there," she says. "Because it is such a small space I had the opportunity to see and ask questions about everything in the commercial art world. Internships like this are so important because they enrich everything you learn in the classroom, and I am grateful for the stipend and arranged housing, both of which made this possible for me."

Alumnae Involvement: A Critical Component

Ann Cassell, director of alumnae relations, praises the Alumnae Board for its contribution. "Their assistance in securing housing hosts for students and contacting alumnae in key cities has been vital to the program's success," she says. "The board looks forward to strengthening the program in the years to come."

To Tina Rolen, "Much of the strength and success of this program has been due to the alumnae who have served as mentors, or in some cases, provided housing for our interns. Based on the feedback I've received, these alumnae feel the experience has brought them closer to Hollins, and they realize most of all that we are still producing fine, smart women."

Jeff Hodges is director of public relations and a frequent contributor to the magazine.