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The Value of an Internship

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At Taylor University, we strive to prepare our students for their next forty years, not just the next four they will be on campus. Internships are a part of this process, bridging the divide between students and professionals. A quality internship provides insight into a student's skills and interests and often leads to networking opportunities and a greater understanding of serving with excellence in any opportunity a student may have down the road. This fits into one of Taylor's missions: whole person education.

Amber Stanley, Assistant Director of Taylor's Calling & Career Office (CCO), explains that internships are a form of prototyping. "Internships provide a chance for the student to gain some experience—to inform their perspectives on how they want to engage in a work environment and what they need from a work environment in order to be successful." Being able to analyze and critically reflect on each internship experience provides a deeper understanding of self, which allows for a more informed decision regarding potential career paths.

Searching for Quality

Not all internships are created equal. An internship is meant to be a valuable experience built on

learning and professional growth, but some internships tend to focus more on answering phones and getting coffee. These internships, which are often unpaid, are not the types of experiences Taylor encourages students to pursue.

The Calling and Career office encourages students to aim for the opposite end of the spectrum. Stanley defines a high-quality internship as, "... meaningful work at a reputable organization within a structured context where the organization is intentionally mentoring the student, building them up, and teaching them industry-relevant skills." Although Taylor isn't a block away from many large corporations, the quality of education and connections within the Taylor community lead our students to these sorts of robust experiences.

Some high-quality internships even turn into careers. For instance, [Computer Science](#) major Caleb Anthony, says "I received a lot of praise from my mentors and was requested to complete the prototype of the app to show clients." His internship was in an Air Force Research Laboratory, and he is already expected to begin another project there post-graduation.

An Out-of-This-World Internship

An example of a high-quality internship is Taylor's Hannah King [interning at NASA's Langley Research Center](#). She spent 10 weeks working on the SAGE III project, which is a mission to collect data on our atmosphere. After the special instrument collects the data, the data needs to be adjusted to account for the instrument's orientation. This process is called altitude adjustment, and Hannah was part of the team that worked to optimize those adjustments.

Working on SAGE III gave King—a [Mathematics—Interdisciplinary](#) major with a [Physics](#) minor—plenty of opportunities to work with theoretical mathematics and physics processes. Despite the occasional challenge, King's time with NASA was successful. Reflecting on her experience, she said, "I've realized that Taylor has prepared me not just for one career or job, it's prepared me to take on just about anything and learn how to do it well ... I certainly don't know how to do everything they give me, but I do know that I feel equipped to keep asking questions and doing my best to keep learning more."

Hannah King's NASA experience isn't the only high-quality internship a Taylor student has been involved in. Three other Taylor students have been accepted into NASA's intern program in the past two years. Several Taylor grads have been awarded the [competitive Orr Fellowship](#). Every year hundreds of students learn more about themselves by engaging with different internships across the globe.

Interning Abroad

[Marketing](#)/Systems major Joe Pfeifer, for example, [spent his summer in Dominica](#) interning with nonprofit organization Samaritan's Purse. Majoring in the marketing field, Pfeifer served as a communications intern, interviewing beneficiaries of Samaritan's Purse and writing stories based on their experiences. He also did some videography work and some data-driven tasks.

One of Pfeifer's favorite aspects of the internship was how the culture and people he was with

shaped his learning. "I really enjoy engrossing myself in new cultures and interacting with different people," he said. "Being in a new country with a new company and a new role required that I just ask questions and listen carefully. This helped make the internship a great experience."

Anthropology and Sociology major Eliza Grothjan also experienced an international internship when she [interned with Peace and Hope International](#), which focuses on seeking justice for poor and oppressed individuals. She worked with an indigenous group of people, collecting information and performing research on their history and faith. Grothjan's experiences helped her prototype effectively.

"Learning about different societies and people around the world is something that initially drew me to anthropology," she said. "Also, I'm passionate about how we, as a people, construct our identity. In this internship, I was able to hear the opinions and stories of people in an organization where individuals are working through what it means to be indigenous and Christian."

All of these high-quality internships helped shape students' views of themselves and discover more about their calling. At Taylor University, we believe God has a plan for each student, and He will call them to do the work they're meant to do. This calling-focused attitude has led students to intern at Harvard, Eli Lilly, the NSA, CERN, St. Jude's, in Hollywood, and at so many other top companies and organizations throughout the country.

Responding to the Call

It takes more than a great company to have a great internship. Students must do their part to identify quality opportunities. Stanley said, "We teach students a lot about the importance of just paying attention ... self-awareness is incredibly important, so on the forefront of gaining an internship, students need to be paying attention to what is most meaningful to them in order to best iterate their future."

Our students have been heeding this advice. Eighty-six percent of Taylor students have completed at least one internship by the time they graduate. On top of that, our career outcomes rate—which determines the percentage of graduates who are employed or enrolled in graduate school six months after graduation—is 99%. That's 18% higher than the national average.

These statistics, according to Stanley, show that, "Taylor's approach is working. And a big part of our success story is internships, given our employment statistics compared to the national average ... Every single experience that a student has teaches them more about who God has created them to be, and how they can best use the talents and abilities He's given them to engage in the world in a meaningful way."