Tara Fleming—Dunuwila Wealth Management

Where was your internship?
Dunuwila Wealth Management, Fayetteville, New York

Tell us about your internship?
I was hired to create a website and to develop subsequent communications and advertising solutions for Adrian Dunuwila's not-for-profit organization, "The Shakti Village Empowerment Program." The organization encompasses a variety of programs that were designed to raise an impoverished village in Sri Lanka out of debilitating poverty. Mr. Dunuwila was raised in this village (Blackpool, Sri Lanka) and eventually moved to America to obtain his post-secondary education and to create a profitable wealth management firm. In 2007, he began to develop SVEP to benefit his hometown. My job is to effectively convey the intentions of this compelling organization in order to cultivate donor participation that is essential to the maintenance of the program.

How did you find your internship?
I owe much credit to a wonderful professor and valuable EBE employee, Dr. Paul Roodin for finding this opportunity. While taking a GST course for teaching assistants, I got the chance to get to know Dr. Roodin. When Mr. Dunuwila presented him with this internship opportunity, Dr. Roodin recognized my strengths and recommended me as a good match for SVEP's needs.

What is your major and did it influence your decision to become an intern?
I am an Applied Mathematical Economics major and Applied Statistics Minor. While the majority of the specific duties that are required of me on a day-to-day basis do not necessarily reflect those that will be in my future career, the website design and problem-solving skills do. This opportunity prepares me for the type of hands-on research that my future job will entail.

What are your main responsibilities as an intern?
As the weeks went on, my responsibilities evolved from being solely responsible for creating the SVEP website to also developing a new brochure and informational handout, writing a newsletter to update current donors on our changes and newest accomplishments, creating an informational and interactive PowerPoint presentation for Mr. Dunuwila's use, and developing a separate website for the wealth management business.

What type of experience have you gained so far that you wouldn't have learned in a classroom?
I have learned how to take on challenges that expand my current skills set while I search for solutions to new problems. I have also vastly improved my communication skills when it comes to both professional and casual adult conversation.

What is the most exciting part of your internship?
I love the idea that I can be part of such a respectable establishment. One of SVEP's goals is to spread the word that every dollar donations can accomplish this! See some success stories or learn how you can help at www.ShaktiVillageEmpowerment.org

Do you have any suggestions for students who would like to do something similar?
My best advice is to never be afraid to make a connection with your professors. This internship and many other opportunities have presented themselves to me through strong professional relationships with my professors. Even if they aren't for your core or major courses, you never know what connections or networking opportunities they possess.

Do you think your internship will play an important role in your education and career?
Beyond the additional skills that I gain from my work with Mr. Dunuwila, this internship has already helped me move on to my next one at Duke University. I believe that the events and extra-curriculars that you involve yourself with during college build on each other, thus it's never too early to start. There is a very finite amount of time for us to take advantage of all of the opportunities here, so start now!

Do you have any internship advice you would like to pass on to other students?
Make it look like you know what you're doing. Don't know the answer to something? Be honest. Your employers will respect it as long as you convey a desire to find the answer, whether that be through them or on your own. Then show them what you've learned. These improvements have been some of the most fulfilling experiences of my college career.

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