

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to participate in the Volunteer Internship Program at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI). I was assigned as an intern to the Jackson Field Office rather than TBI Headquarters in Nashville, which in itself presented a number of pros and cons. I feel that working in the smaller field office allowed me a much more unique experience than the strict design of the internship program in Nashville. I was also able to spend more time with individual agents, asking questions and learning details of the job than I believe I would have at the much larger headquarters. Working at the field office did have its drawbacks, however. TBI headquarters houses five divisions that interns rotate through over ten weeks. The field office only has three divisions (Criminal Investigative Division (CID), Drug Investigative Division (DID), and Medicaid Fraud) and I had no schedule or timeframe for experiencing each of them. I have no regrets about the office I was placed in, though. My experience was educational, unique, and full of invaluable experience that will help me tremendously in deciding my future. I also met many people that helped me immensely both during my internship and in providing me with information to help in narrowing my future career focus.

Day-to-day responsibilities during my internship were fairly routine. I made countless copies of case files, investigative reports, receipts, and any other documents the agents or secretaries may have needed. Cold case files were particularly interesting to glance through. I also organized case files. I observed the creation of new case files and assisted the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) in filling out paperwork requesting evidence disposal. In my free time, I was able to read through case files and browse the

TBI's policies and procedures for different types of investigations. This taught me the incredible amount of attention to detail that is required in this career. The sheer number of reports filled out for each investigation was astounding. I also had many enlightening conversations with various agents, who were always eager to help and answer any questions I had, or simply chat and give advice about my future career plans. This was particularly valuable, because I came into this internship somewhat unsure of the direction that I would like my career to take and they helped me to narrow my focus and learn what path to take to succeed in a variety of career options.

While my day-to-day office responsibilities were interesting and educational, they could not compare to the field experiences that I had during this internship. I was able to go to the firing range my very first week there, to observe agents doing their annual firearm qualifications. Surprisingly, I did much more than observe. I actually participated. I received a holster, bulletproof vest, and one of the agents actually let me borrow two of his guns and patiently instructed me through the entire day of firearm training.

My second field experience was participating in surveillance during a narcotics buy. Basically, I rode with the DID ASAC, and learned where the buy was to take place from the Drug Task Force officers, who were heading the operation. We parked at a distance from the actual operation and listened to the radio, which picked up transmission from the wire worn by the agent participating in the operation. It was amazing to be able to participate so closely in an operation and the DID agents talked me through each step and answered my multitude of questions. This was followed in a couple of weeks by another surveillance

operation, in which I rode with the ASAC and a local prosecutor and listened to an agent attempt to establish initial contact with a suspect.

The next, and possibly most interesting experience for me, was observing a polygraph exam. The first time, I rode with the polygraph examiner to another county where she was to do an examination. However, the examinee never appeared. I was able to observe an examination a few days later and it was worth the wait. I was enthralled by the whole process and the expertise of the examiner both during the exam and in the subsequent interview, in which he confessed to the crime, was amazing. A local police officer was in the observation room to explain certain "tells" that I should be looking for as signs of deceit during the exam. I was also able to use knowledge from my psychology classes to form some opinions about the psychological state of this examinee and consider how I would use this information to interview the suspect.

I had to go to TBI headquarters in Nashville during my internship in order to observe an autopsy at the morgue across the street. We actually were able to observe five autopsies which took place simultaneously. I definitely would not say this was my favorite part of the internship, but it was certainly educational.

My last major experience was attending a hearing to determine psychological competency at the Federal Court Building in Memphis. This experience was most closely related to my psychology major, so I felt very much in my element while listening to the experts (forensic psychologists) give their testimony. As forensic psychology has always been my primary area of interest, I was very excited to be able to see them in action.

Surprisingly, however, I was slightly less enthralled by the prospect of that career after seeing what it is really like. It interested me greatly and I learned a great deal about court procedure, but there have been other aspects of this internship that have intrigued me more.

Coming into this internship, my goal was to use my experience at the TBI to help decide on a future career path and post-Sewanee plan, or at least narrow down my options. It has succeeded in doing that and given me a rare and incredible opportunity to observe one of the most respected government agencies in the state. I'm even considering (at the advice of several persuasive agents) applying to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation when I graduate. This internship has shown me that it can be a very worthwhile and fulfilling career.