

Philip Powell
Tonya Public Affairs Fund Executive Summary

During the summer of 2009, I interned under Assistant Public Defender Brad Peabody in the Appellate Division of the Maryland State Public Defender's Office. This internship took place in Baltimore, Maryland, and I lived in Washington D.C. This internship educated me on the workings of the criminal legal system. It was also an experience that tested and opened my mind.

I saw firsthand how cases are processed in the criminal court system. I met with assistant public defenders and state prosecutors and learned more about what goes on in the day-to-day operations of a trial. I would meet people accused of murder, rape, theft, and various other crimes. These were people whom I was not accustomed to being around and so I saw a side of society that I would not have experienced at Sewanee.

I learned how to use the legal research database, Westlaw, and to master it so that I could find what I needed with little difficulty. Once Mr. Peabody was confident in my research and writing skills, he assigned me legal briefs to dissect and research. He wanted me to look up cases that the State was going to use in his upcoming cases. Mr. Peabody used my research in one of his cases, a trial I experienced firsthand.

Towards the end of my internship, Mr. Peabody asked for me to write the arguments for a brief for one of his cases. I was nervous at first, but felt confident with the training that Mr. Peabody had given me to research and write these arguments.

I worked in Baltimore, but lived in D.C., and this made for an hour commute by train each way every day. I chose to live in D.C. because of the strong Sewanee presence there. I knew that there were not only going to be many alumni, but also, my fellow classmates. In Baltimore, I went to Baltimore Orioles' games, walked around the inner harbor and downtown. For me, it was a tale of two cities this summer.

Brad Peabody was an excellent mentor to me. I would often ask him questions about the legal profession and law school and such, and he would always answer with honesty and clarity. He was genuinely interested in my future, and has always expressed support for my plans to go to law school. The fact that he went to Sewanee helped us make a connection right away, as we would share stories and compare our experiences at Sewanee. On a more personal note, I appreciated how he never doubted my abilities because of my hearing loss. He expected me to do the job just as well, and that helped my self-esteem.

I am also grateful to the Tonya Public Affairs fund for the stipend I received this summer. The stipend helped me greatly with my costs of living. I know that this is an advantage that we have here at Sewanee that most other schools do not.

My internship under Brad Peabody was an educational and enlightening experience. I am now more confident than ever in pursuing Law as a profession. I had an amazing time in D.C., seeing friends, and making new ones. This was an experience that would not have been possible without the help of the Tonya Public Affairs fund.