

Will Turner

Tonya Public Affairs Fund Executive Summary

Over the course of the first six weeks of summer, I was working as an intern for the office of Senator Bob Corker of the state of Tennessee in his Washington DC office. As an intern, I had various responsibilities such as answering constituent calls, conducting legislative research, sorting constituent mail, as well as giving capitol tours to Tennessee residents. Each day, I was assigned one of the above responsibilities and that would be my given task. In addition to the given assignment for the day, I usually had a number of different projects that I would be working on in the meantime. I found that as an intern, much of your workload was on your own discretion. Outside of your given assignments, one could work as hard he or she wanted or could relax as they pleased. I made it a point to seek out as many projects as I could handle without interfering with any previous assignments.

As interns, we were given many stimulating assignments which required much attention and hard work. Much praise was given for jobs well done and often times it could be very accrediting, especially when catching the attention of experienced staffers. However, at the end of the day I was still an intern, and was still given many chores and tasks that were less than desirable. As interns, we all knew our rank and never let such tasks bother us; they were never that bad anyway.

If I had to convey one lesson that I have learned throughout my summer internship experience, it is that opportunities are everywhere. Had it not been for a casual conversation with Melissa Webb a few days before the final deadline, I would not have known to apply for the Tonya Internship Funding. Additionally, my second internship of the summer would not have occurred had it not been for a tip I received from a friend at a party. These two examples, as well as many more less significant occurrences, have led me to conclude that the phrase "knowledge is power" is valid. More important than knowledge itself is the utilization of knowledge: how to take what you know and manifest it into something greater. My second internship of the summer in Congressman Tom Graves' office required me to perform at a much higher level since I was the only intern in the office. This left me to deal with much more pressure as I was under much more scrutiny from my superior peers.

It is easy for us to perceive the "real world" as a place in which formal interviews, stellar resumes, and well-written recommendations are the way in which people earn jobs. While all three of the above mentioned aspects of job-hunting are indeed very important, it is my belief that those are put in place for employers to gauge a much more important aspect: who you are. The best resume in the world is a great competitive advantage, however, in most cases, if employers sense that you cannot be a part of an organization that spends the majority of their waking lives together, chances are that a 4.0 GPA will not be what they were looking for. Though this belief comes from very little experience, this is something that I think will be my competitive advantage in the future.