

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

INTERNSHIP REPORT

My internship at Washington National Cathedral (WNC) for the Director of Strategic Programs took my Sewanee education and placed it within a real-world context. It gave me experience in strategic planning, church operations, and cultural institutional development. I feel that the internship was extraordinarily helpful in providing a transitional experience between classes at Sewanee and a professional work environment. At the Cathedral, I combined my liberal arts background with the new work experience to enhance my professional skill set and performed above and beyond the expectations of my supervisor. I would also advocate and hope that this internship can become a permanent partnership between Sewanee and Washington National Cathedral so that others can take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Washington National Cathedral is phasing into a major transition in its operations and ministries, a situation that provided a variety and multitude of projects in which I was able to play an important role. Primarily, I was assigned to assist the Program Committee of the Chapter (WNC's board of directors). The Committee's charge over the summer was to develop a new programmatic vision for the organization. I produced twelve reports covering each of the Committee's five areas of focus. In researching these areas, I was required to draw on many different Sewanee classes and experiences; from art classes and working in the University Art Gallery, to statistics and economics classes I took as a freshman and sophomore. These reports contained much of the background information the Committee used to guide their discussions and reach conclusions, and I was called upon multiple times to either expand or extrapolate further on the research I had presented.

The Program Committee's most work-intensive subcommittee focused on the Cathedral College. The College of Preachers was closed in late 2008 because of financial difficulties, however, the Cathedral has reached a point where it is considering how it might reopen and use the space in new ways. This required archive research, reengineering of past operational budgets, and extrapolating said budgets forward. These documents showed the subcommittee all overhead costs associated with maintaining the College's facilities in their current state, as well as those incurred post-renovation. This required the most work on my end, yet allowed me the largest opportunity to contribute in the subcommittee's dialogue.

The Cathedral was also in the midst of finalizing plans to turn the old baptistery building into a small café. This project, another item placed under strategic programs, gave me the opportunity to produce major documents for in-house publishing as well as both internal and external distribution. These documents required me to learn to use a combination of Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign to create documents that appeared professional, could be easily understood, and could be effectively used as presentation aids. These projects allowed me to begin to build a professional work portfolio that demonstrates my ability to produce documents that look more professional than typical Word and Excel files.

After the Programming Committee priorities and those of the café, I worked on many other projects and with groups that were placed underneath the Strategic Programs department.

This included the Visitor Programs office that manages tours, admissions, and the Docent Corps. I also sat in on several meetings concerning the earthquake damage the Cathedral sustained in 2011. Finally, I researched several other areas of focus for other members of the Cathedral staff that ranged in a variety of topics, including: civil rights anniversaries, wedding and funeral pricing, gift shop operations, and publicity. This tertiary level of research and meetings provided many of the most interesting topics during this internship, and allowed me to meet many of the Cathedral's staff and see how the larger organization of the Cathedral functioned.

My experiences at Washington National Cathedral also showed me how my political science education adds to my liberal arts skill set in two critical ways. The first concerns the fundamental basis of political science in human nature. Politics is not confined to the details of partisan politics and campaigns, and students considering majoring in political science should not confine themselves to the well-trodden paths of law school or government agencies. Students who have majored in political science will have developed the skill to identify the drivers behind decision-making processes. Being able to analyze these drivers applies not only to politics, but can also be used in a variety of business applications. Whether that is to advance your company, a department, or one's position in the workplace, the basis of politics is involved at every level of human interaction. From this insight you can gain a better sense of judgment: Take all of the information given to you, focus on the important aspects, and come to a quick, sound decision based on the pertinent information. I have found that a major portion of gaining experience at an internship is through observing people in your office exercise that judgment. By examining their decisions, you in turn hone your own ability to analyze a situation and execute sound judgment.

At Washington National Cathedral I was able to observe the Chapter, Program Committee, three Chapter subcommittees, and Cathedral staff deliberate and form policies that matured my professional abilities. Working as an intern on substantive research and contributing in meetings sets this internship apart. Rather than spending the Summer making copies, filing documents, or answering the phone on the off chance that I might get to contribute to the larger organization, every day I spent at the Cathedral I was able to contribute substantive research, analysis, and opinions. I was also able to learn from listening and taking part in all of the meetings and conference calls within the strategic programs office. I began to develop a professional portfolio to accompany my redesigned resume to stand out professionally. I was also able to build off of my liberal arts and political science background to develop professional skills that will help me move forward in the post-graduate world. I think these factors set this internship apart, even by Sewanee's high standards, and feel that this opportunity I was given should be extended to other Sewanee graduates in the future.