

Interning at the Research and Planning Division of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development this summer was a wonderful learning experience. The Department is responsible for designing and analyzing projects to promote economic and community development within the state. The role of the Research and Planning Division in which I worked is to assist the Department in its mission to foster growth, increase individual incomes, and attract businesses to the state by working to identify, analyze, and disseminate current business trends and economic data. The purpose of this research is to aid key economic decision-makers and policy-makers in making informed decisions concerning the formation and implementation of projects for development so that they may be most effective in furthering the growth and improving the quality of life for the people of Tennessee.

The first of the multiple projects I was assigned throughout the course of my 10-week internship was the project of updating the Tennessee County Data Sheets that the division posts on its website. These documents highlight data and trends for each of the 95 counties of Tennessee. This task required the collection of current and past data for population estimates and forecasts, labor force estimates, sales and property taxes, industries and announced industrial growth, income, educational attainment, and livability (measured by median housing values) for each county. I first found the sources from which the data for previous years had been taken, and then updated the division's database with estimates for years for which new data had been published.

Additionally, I worked on comparing business taxes and incentives in the state to those in other competitor states. The purpose of these documents, titled Competitive State Profiles on Major Business Taxes and Incentives, is to attract businesses to come to Tennessee when they are considering a location for opening a firm or business. The project involved reading the tax codes and

state governmental websites of states being compared to Tennessee in order to find tax rates, as well as other financial incentives and labor force training services that a business might find appealing.

I also worked on developing a systematic approach for identifying the industries in the state of Tennessee which were both high-wage *and* high-growth in 2008. Because the terms “high-wage” and “high-growth” are relative and not absolute, I established some standards for considering what high-wage and high-growth means based on the number of standard deviation an industry’s sum of average employment and average annual wage were above the means for these two variables. For a final project I used the factor of female employment as a way to rank those industries which, in the previous study, were found to be high-wage and high-growth. Because there is no published data on the number of female employees in each industry in Tennessee in the year of 2008, I designed a method for finding an estimate using various sets of data. This research provides one way of identifying industries which it would be most beneficial for the state to focus its attention on and direct its money and planning for development towards.

In conclusion, the internship allowed me to apply my studies of international development at Sewanee to a real work environment. Additionally, it provided me with a greater understanding of what the field of economic development within the state of Tennessee is about. I am very appreciative of the Tonya Public Affairs Internship Fund for allowing me to have this experience.