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# MATC Internship Program

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MID-AMERICA  
TRANSPORTATION CENTER

Reese Meyer  
OLSSON ASSOCIATES

Over my first two years of college it was continually repeated by the faculty within the College of Engineering that an internship is a great opportunity that we all needed to take advantage of during our undergraduate careers. Along with these comments also came the remarks about how it is a great learning experience and how it gives you a great glimpse into what an engineer actually does in the industry. I, probably like most of my peers at the time, thought that they were just exaggerating how important it is to have at least one internship before graduation. I knew that internships were a way for companies to test drive employees and see their work ethic and drive as well as being an opportunity for the intern to see how they fit with that company's culture and business practices. What I did not realize was how immensely short my assumptions fell in comparison to the real importance of internships.

Internships are about learning. Looking back on the summer, I cannot believe the amount of knowledge I have gained in the past three months. I have learned the drafting software Microstation along with Autoturn and Geopak, which enhances the capabilities of Microstation. This knowledge alone is a huge asset for the future since it is a very common software used in the transportation industry, yet it barely begins to scratch the surface of all that I learned. After spending so much time with plan sets for different projects and making the redline corrections, I began to learn the types of sheets used in the plan sets as well as the reasons behind including many of the sheets. The majority of the learning though, is not encompassed in either of those learning experiences, rather the most learning happened when I was interacting with my coworkers. It was at these times that I began to pick up terminology used in the industry, little tricks that each of them use to allow them to make better use of the drafting software, and learned about their past experiences. In the end, I was constantly amazed at how much I was

learning that had so little to do with concepts that can be taught in a classroom, yet is very relevant in the industry.

Internships are about finding a job or industry that you enjoy. Before this internship, I had very little idea of which subdiscipline of civil engineering I wanted to go into, but I thought that either transportation or structural sounded the most appealing. After just a few short months interning in the transportation industry, I think that I have found the area of civil engineering I want to make a career out of. Each day was enjoyable for me, whether I was working on redlines, verifying quantities, or doing a job as tedious as making sure that all of the grade notes on a project were correct. All the tasks that I did this summer may not have been the most important at times, but each one needed to be done to produce a completed plan set. Over the summer, it was all these smaller, less technical tasks that opened my eyes to the complexity of the projects that I was working on and allowed me to realize that this is a field that intrigues me more than enough to make into a career.

Internships are about gaining related experience to your future career. Other jobs can teach you so many lessons about life and business, but the experience gained from an internship cannot be rivaled. The experience I gained this summer will help me for the rest of my career. I gained experience from a wide variety of projects this summer that allowed me to see how broad transportation engineering really is. I worked on a bike trail for a small town, created a detour sheet and traffic control plan new/reconstruction project in Colorado, created an erosion control plan new/reconstruction project in Lincoln, adjusted typical cross sections' mill and overlay project near McCook, and created truck turning movement sheets for NDOR permitting. Even with all these diverse experiences that I am sure to look back to for help on future projects, the greatest experience came from interacting with the people I worked with. It was through their

guidance and explanations to my numerous questions that helped me learn the terminology used in the field, better understand the standards set by our clients for our plan sheets, and find shortcuts to tasks that were new to me, but that they had done hundreds of times.

After such a short time, I am amazed by the lessons this internship has taught me. It has demonstrated to me that it is alright to struggle because it is through those struggles that come some of the best learning experiences. It also has shown me that asking questions is a great way to learn from the experience and knowledge that your coworkers have gained over their careers. Overall, this internship has been one of the greatest learning experiences of my life, an asset for helping me find a career path where I enjoy going to work each day, and an opportunity to gain experience in what I now think might be my chosen career path.