Hodson Internship Reports

Summer 2020
Annapolis, Maryland

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE OFFICE OF Career Services
# Hodson Internship Reports
## Summer 2020

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Micalah Miller ’22
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Will Payne ’22
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Wilson Redfield ’21
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Nicholas Thorp ’20
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Anurag Upadhyaya ’21
Vidyarthi Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, Nepal
Overview of the 2020 Hodson Internship Awards

Tbel Abuseridze '20, National Geographic Magazine, Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia
Work as a science/culture reporter and photographer on the magazine’s electronic platform; shoot or select images for his own stories while reporting directly to the Editor-in-Chief.

Yoonkyoung Choh '20, Korea Startup Forum, Seoul, South Korea
Support the director of policy by studying the situation of startup businesses in Korea through comparison with other countries’ startups; organize data; research foreign cases; and attend meetings while preparing the conference hall and meeting documents and providing meeting summaries.

Francisco Contreras ‘20, Polycentric Learning Group, Guatemala City, Guatemala
Design and implement a training program of “Getting Things Done” (GTD) for fifty managers; edit and revise Spanish translation of agile management practices; assist in training and help implement “holacracy” management and organizational governance.

Julia Cooper ’20, Timberman Beverly Productions, Culver City, CA*
Conduct research and provide notes on scripts and book coverage; attend development and/or production meetings; provide detailed notes on scripts in active development; and help with administrative duties.

Sophia Cote '21, Kenneth Milton Fine Arts, Chestertown, MD
Learn how to examine a painting, identifying and describing its condition using terms used by professional conservators; learn how to conduct tests and propose a treatment proposal; participate in the actual cleaning of a painting.

Ava Cusey '22, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC
Assist in the economic policy studies department with its strategic communications operations; maintain department social media accounts; compile daily reports on important news stories and other economic policy research; and assisting with department newsletters.

Austin Dumas '21, NASA NIAC Program, Washington, DC**
Interview past NIAC Fellows to identify successes and failures to measure the effect and impact of the program; summarize in a comprehensive report. In addition, review documents on the requirements for radiation risk mitigation in a planned return to the Moon; examine the ability of current forecast tools to meet timeliness requirements for astronauts to reach safe haven in active periods of solar activity.

Caleb Dutton '21, American Shakespeare Center, Staunton, VA
Assist in maintaining production materials, marketing materials, and other items of interest in a center designed to explore the English Renaissance stage and its practices through performance and education; work with archives and scholars.

Rachel Gordon '21, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), Edgewater, MD*
Conduct literature review and research; data analysis, modeling of existing data sets related to coastal/estuarine acidification chemistry; analyses are designed to contribute to a larger analysis of non-carbonate alkalinity in the Chesapeake Bay and its effects on acidification; co-author peer-reviewed article.

Ellie Gott '21, The Light House Inc., Annapolis, MD
Work with the on-site Safe Harbour Resource Center, greeting at-risk populations currently experiencing homelessness with referrals to in-house services; track data, collaborate with the workforce development team; participate in public outreach, volunteer coordination, and admin assistance.
Samuel Hage, GI’20, The Key School, Annapolis, MD
Assistant teach ninth-grade classes studying ancient and medieval literature, history, and philosophy; work with student on reading and writing skills in the Writing Center; support teachers with grading and quizzes.

Allegra Hall ’22, Elan Productions, Annapolis, MD
Learn and practice in areas of arts management including strategic planning, program development and assessment, relationship building, financial management, marketing, box office management, and leadership training.

Isabella Hougie ’22: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Annapolis Office, Annapolis, MD
Work closely with the Assistant Public Defender in the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court; attend court to observe proceedings involving felony criminal cases such status conference motions, hearings, and trials; accompany attorney to the jails to conduct legal visits with clients.

Anton Kalmysh ’20, MZ Wallace, Inc., New York, NY
Work with the Ecommerce Coordinator and digital team to support and execute MZ Wallace’s e-commerce and customer experience strategies; help create a brand experience that engages consumers, solidifies communication, and drives conversion and sales; and research and provide reporting on current topics in UX, including but not limited to risks and opportunities, the competitive landscape, and ecommerce trends. Please note: this internship began in Fall 2020.

Write press releases for forthcoming titles; create ad and direct mail copy; design simple ads and fliers; solicit blog entries from authors; and identify and correct errors in data creation and dissemination.

Zachary Leveroni ’22, University of Chicago, Department of Psychology, Chicago, IL*
Obtain a deeper understanding of research and operations in a neuroscience laboratory; gain an understanding in using a model organism for neuroscience research; become competent in general scientific research methodologies; support the management of the animal colony; be proactive in researching relevant literature and techniques; participate in lab meetings and discussions. Please note: this internship began in Fall 2020.

Yufei “Chris” Liu ’22, Medstar Georgetown University Hospital, Multiple Sclerosis and Neuroimmunology Center, Washington, DC*
Coordinate educational seminars targeting newly diagnosed MS patients; help to develop educational content related to MS; shadow neurologists; assist the research team with clinical trials.

Jameson Marshall ’20, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Maryland, Baltimore, MD
Investigate allegations of suspected violations of Federal criminal statutes in the District of Maryland, including death eligible cases. Please note: this internship began in Fall 2020.

Micalah Miller ’22, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Annapolis Office, Annapolis, MD
Assist the Public Defender with her caseload; attend court to observe the Anne Arundel County Adult Circuit Drug Court and all proceedings involving felony criminal cases; review discovery and offer briefs on the cases; learn issue spotting; draft potential pre-trial and post-trial motions; and perform legal research.
William Payne ’22, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Center for Folklife Cultural Heritage, Washington, DC
Assist director of Web and IT with daily operations related to the management of the website and digital collection; digitize images; scan archival documents; encode audio and video; enter meta data; and contribute written content for website.

Jessica Peterson ’21, City of Kansas City, Missouri, Department of Planning and Development, Kansas City, MO
Assist with updating the City’s Comprehensive Plan; perform research related to current planning; and assist with development case review.

Wilson Redfield ’21, Historic Annapolis Foundation, Annapolis, MD
Assist with the planning, promotion and execution of special fundraising events, including building and maintaining relationships with local media; assist in marketing through social media channels; build and maintain press kits; write and distribute press releases and advertising copy.

Nicholas Thorp ’20, East Oaks Studio, Cary, NC
Provide support in project management, including film and live-stream production and editing; participate in client relations and marketing, event-planning, grant writing and fundraising, and film production; work on event/art exhibitions and planning.

Anurag Upadhyaya ’21, Vidhyarthi Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, Nepal
Act as an assistant editor assigned to proofreading, critically commenting on writings; communicating with authors; and administrative communications within the publication.

*Hosted or funded by a SJC alumnus/a

Please note:
Due to changes brought about by COVID-19 at some internship sites, 17 students awarded Hodson funding were offered alternatives. Five Hodson awardees participated in coursework through Pathways and twelve awardees have deferred their Hodson funding to fall 2020 (class of 2020 only) or summer 2021.
It has always been my dream to work with NatGeo and I always thought I could only achieve it after some years of my photography career. But this summer I was lucky to secure an internship at National Geographic Georgia, as a photojournalist. Since my favorite genre of photography has become people and culture, this place is exactly where I wanted to be and, hopefully, it is where I belong.

Even though the world went remote due to the Covid-19 pandemic, my job as a photographer was to work remotely anyway. The beautiful part about this internship was that I got to travel around Georgia to gather stories of people and write about them. Alongside photojournalistic activities, I also did some office work like translating stories from English to Georgian for the local reader and write “Retros” for the journal (gathering information about a certain person/story and writing a short paragraph about it). At first, it was a bit tough to get to know my co-workers since we were very afraid of the pandemic, but after some time as the situation became more manageable (for Georgia, at least; we have handled the first wave very well) we slowly started to meet in our office, with all precautions of course.

After we started to meet up, we started actively talking about our future plans and what we could potentially do not only with my projects, but also for our social media and the company in a nutshell. This is where my SJC experience came in handy. This is where my SJC experience always comes in handy. I believe that the creativity I’ve acquired at SJC is the most important skill alongside the ability to engage in dialectics with another person. Asking the right questions and observing minute details has helped me and my co-workers to further the work at the company.

What I think is the most important help from St. John’s in my personal work is that I was able to write and think about certain topics in a slightly different way. Looking for stories among people is like looking for a topic from a book for annual essays. Listening to what people told me, I could then pinpoint a specific question which then became the subject of inquiry. For four years, thinking about human nature (our happiness, suffering, sorrow, etc.) made it more interesting to look at other people’s perspectives about the world around us. Hence, my projects include more human stories which is exactly what The National Geographic was asking me to do. Writing essays at SJC was an immense help.

The environment at NatGeo was fantastic. Everybody was friendly and supportive all the time. Especially my mentor. She has taught me many things with regards to writing and photography, but most of all I learned a lot of life lessons that helped me grow not just as a worker, but as a person too. Natia is a great mentor and a friend and she never hesitated to pinpoint my mistakes while providing solutions to help me with those problems. Working at NatGeo was a wonderful ride this summer as I was given full freedom to choose topics of my fancy. I never felt restricted in what I was doing. Most projects I had in my mind were welcomed.

The only downside was the pandemic. Working for a project means that I have to spend more time with it than I thought I would have. One project can last for weeks because I have to repeatedly visit the site I am working on to photograph it properly. This is the difference between this kind of journalism and “news journalism” for instance. Hence, it was hard to be consistent with my projects because the places I’ve been visiting have been locked down, then reopened and locked down again. It really messed up my workflow. Marketplaces I’ve been photographing became empty and as I am writing this, the marketplace I am currently working on is going to be shut down too (new cases of the virus). But I hope I can work on them in the near future. I believe that after the internship is done completely, I will be able to work for the company. Even if I don’t get a job there, I know that I am always welcome to make projects and write for them at any time.
Yoonkyoung Choh ‘20
Korea Startup Forum
Seoul, South Korea

I was thinking about whether I should go to graduate school right after I graduate from St. John’s College or if I should work in a field that I am interested in? My decision was helped when I won Hodson funding and got an internship from Korea Startup Forum. I could try out the workplace exactly where I want to be because of the funding. I did not need to think about financial problems during the internship and the company hired me without a financial burden. Therefore, I was able to work at Korea Startup Forum, an ideal place to learn the environment of the startup field.

KSF, Korea Startup Forum, is technically not a forum but an association. Currently, KSF has more than 1,500 startups as their members. KSF provides legal advice to the new startups and represents the startups’ voice against the government’s regulations. On the one hand, Korea is tied with Germany as the 6th largest country that has a lot of Unicorns—a unicorn is a term in the business world to indicate a privately held startup company with values at over $1 billion. On the other hand, Koreans often complain that because Korea has so many regulations, they cannot grow as US or China can. I wanted to know more about the type of regulations that are applied to companies that make it hard to grow and wondered if the regulations really need to be removed. I thought KSF is the best place to see the big picture of the startup environment.

I was worried to be an employee because I didn’t have any previous work experience at all. But since I had studied in the US, they asked me to research foreign countries’ startup regulations. There is a “net neutrality” problem that every county is facing. It becomes a very important issue because net is crucial in the 4th industry. The techniques of autonomous cars and remote medical treatment and surgery will use the network. So, it is important for companies to keep the net usage fee neutral. I have been researching the foreign cases of net neutrality policy. Trump has removed the net neutrality and the EU has released guidelines about how to keep net neutrality and transparency of network providers. Another issue that I have dealt with is the app commission that a company has to pay to Apple when it wants to put an app in the Appstore. Apple and Google get 30% of the commission. This is a crucial policy to small startup companies who are dependent on applications. Other than research about big issues in the startup field all over the world, I was able to participate in many of the meetings. Because I was working in a policy department, my supervisor went to a lot of meetings that were held in the national assembly and she attended a lot of forums to provide a voice for the startup’s position.

I learned how to use my voice effectively and how to persuade people who have different ideas. Lastly, I visited actual startup companies to find out more about the kinds of issues they have. It was such a good experience to know the field. KSF has provided me with the experience of both doing research and listening to the voice of startups.

I was not sure how my experience at St. John’s would help me at work. Especially as Startup is all about new technology and running businesses and dealing with government regulations about policy. I thought my experience of reading classics and discussing them was not linked to my new work in KSF. What I learned at St. John’s College, however, is not just knowledge of classics, but that I could confidently present my opinions and questions. In fact, my supervisor asked me about my personal opinion, not the startup’s position, so that she could create a startup’s voice that is not
biased toward one side. We want to know that KSF's voice is not just beneficial for startup businesses, but that it could have a positive impact on society as a whole too.

I can say that the ten-week internship made me a better person and has increased my curiosity about the world. In KSF, I learned how the world is changing. Start-ups are weak compared to big companies. Start-ups, however, are places that present innovative ideas that make the world more convenient. I think observing what start-ups are doing is the best tool to see how much technology is developing on the front line of change in the world. It is rewarding to bring their voices to the public; they have brilliant ideas but cannot deal with the government and are buried by large corporations. Previously, I thought that the way to know justice was to study politics in school. But after an internship, I think I should put myself in the field to learn more. However, I can still aim to take a graduate program when I feel I am lacking in academic knowledge. However, unlike in the past when I thought I would do my master's degree right after I finished my academic studies, now I want to gain more work experience.

The best part of the work environment in KSF was the people. My supervisor trusts the employees and she believes that they work hard while she takes care of them. That is why I could work freely, and the employees enjoy working with the boss. My supervisor has created an atmosphere where everyone can talk comfortably about anything together, like friends. I was so thankful to my co-workers who tried to teach me as much as possible. Those were the elements that I would like to repeat in my future employment.

Thankfully, I have a chance to work longer by extending my contract right after my internship. I am proud that my supervisor has recognized my ability and I am glad that I was helpful.
My Hodson internship with the Polycentric Learning Group was a lesson in adaptability and persistence. The internship was meant to take place in Guatemala City, and the purchase of plane tickets and hotel reservations corroborated that. But the world had other plans. The worldwide health pandemic changed my travel plans a few times, lost some of PLG’s most important clients, and redefined everyone’s tasks and roles at the organization.

Though I was flanked by chaos and uncertainty in my personal life, my daily remote work with the organization was a haven from the storm. I worked directly with Albert Loan, founder of the Polycentric Group, and Luis Fernando, a Santa Fe Johnnie who was also an intern. The three of us formed a great team. At least three times a week we held Zoom meetings that would often last the whole day and continue well into the evening. At these meetings, we would analyze the past, present, and future of the Polycentric Learning Group. We brainstormed what direction to take and how, we read relevant texts that were the foundation of the organization, and assigned tasks that would turn these ideas into reality.

The rest of the time we worked on the tasks assigned at the meetings. My first task was the transcription and subtitling of some training videos. My concurrent task was adding to the shared documents that formed the bases of PLG’s next project, an online liberal arts training program.

My St. John’s education was essential for my work, especially this last task. In order to add to the documents, I had to synthesize vast amounts of very complex texts, often philosophical and sometimes technical. I had to read authors ranging from Michael Oakeshott to Michael Polanyi, to Ludwig Von Mises. Our “magnum opus” at the internship was a chart of meta-questions that will become the foundation of PLG’s online program. The whole team was proud of this great accomplishment, and the two Johnnies could see our education represented in the chart.

I tried to perform as best I could. While I think I produced very good work, I was at times distracted by the uncertainty and pain of the current world pandemic. Albert was very gracious and always willing to meet and strategize on how to keep focused and healthy. I could not have faced this time without the support of this great team; I only wish they could have seen me at my best. Nonetheless, I leave my internship with great friends, a mentor, and future collaborators.
Funded in honor of Jodie Lee Adams

Interning online for the Production Company was quite different than it might have gone if it were in person. Had we been in person, we might have had the opportunity to visit writers room discussions, participate in meetings with other producers and writers, and many others. Being remote, however, had its advantages as well! It gave me more opportunities to focus on the tasks at hand with more energy and time. My reports and research were more in depth, and my online and zoom interactions were more concise, detailed, and to the point. I also was able to spend more of my time reading and watching shows scouting out for actors, directors, and writers. I was also able to get more focused time with the other interns and producers, who were then able to help guide me in the ways of the business, and teach me about the process through which a television show goes, especially in these changing times. I feel that working remotely will help me adapt more quickly to changing circumstances, and take advantage of all the time I do have. Time management is key!

My work at St. John’s helped a ton! The skills I have developed throughout my four years of communication, and deliberation with my reading and writing were incredibly useful when conducting research for new shows, looking for more meaning in the stories, and communicating what was meaningful to me, with those around me. I feel very well prepared especially for the content of what we were doing, even though I did not get to see my coworkers as often as I might have liked. I felt no anxiety about the changing of the circumstances, and was able to do much more with the time I had.

I really enjoyed my coworkers who were available, friendly, and relatable. They were all enthusiastic to help, and I could see myself working with them in the future. I suppose the thing I liked least was being unable to network and share my ideas more quickly with my coworkers. Not being in an office meant that I couldn’t chat about our projects with the others in the office, and some of the producers I hardly ever got to speak to. The silver lining, however, was that these circumstances made me more deliberate with what I did want to share and say, and I was able to solve problems on my own that I might have otherwise reached out for.

I would love to spend more time focused in this industry, and I think that this was a direction I was already moving towards at the beginning of the summer. If anything, I feel more confident with my decision, and motivated about pursuing my passions, even if that means taking on more things at once. I have also learned that working with people that you like is key. I find it really important to have a comfortable work environment with others who I can relate to as well as move forward with. This inspires creativity and problem solving. It also means I can surround myself with others like me and we can work together in our future endeavors and I love this idea. Hopefully this internship could turn into future employment! I will continue reaching out and making myself available if they have a job opening in the future.
For my Hodson Summer Internship, I worked directly under Kenneth Milton, a life-long art conservator. I was lucky enough to be able to complete my internship in-person in his studio, rather than online, as many of my peers had to do. My time was spent quietly working alongside Mr. Milton and gaining a practical, hands-on understanding of the foundations of art conservation. I assisted Mr. Milton in every step of conserving a piece. First we would assess the painting and its chemical makeup to determine the best chemicals to use for cleaning, then using them to remove decades of old varnish and dirt off of the painting. Next, if the piece was particularly warped, cracked, or otherwise damaged, we would prepare the surface with facing, remove it from the stretcher, and use a heated vacuum-sealed table to soften the paint and smooth out the surface. If needed, we would re-line the piece before returning it to the stretcher. The final step was to end-paint over any areas where paint was missing or damaged, and finally to coat the piece in a fresh layer of varnish. Since the work at hand depended so heavily on the needs of the individual painting, there were of course many other techniques I became acquainted with—and in addition to working on the paintings themselves, I assisted Mr. Milton in administrative matters.

I like to think that at St. John’s, we have the unique opportunity to practice philosophy rather than just learn about it. During the course of my internship, I was able to learn the theories behind methods of conservation through practice and experience, rather than learning them exclusively in the abstract. I found that while conservation is a very physical endeavor, it is still full of philosophical questions. Conservation can, in some cases, call into question the true nature of a work of art; is the true form necessarily the original form, or do time and damage become as much a part of the work as the original brushstrokes? If a painting changes drastically after restoration (as in the case of Rembrandt’s “The Mill”— when the centuries of discolored varnish were removed, the sky changed from a dramatic, moody ochre to a pale, picturesque blue) does our previous understanding of the painting become obsolete, or has the painting become something entirely new? While I of course did not work on any Rembrandts this summer, thinking about these sorts of questions did help me in learning how to make critical decisions regarding the process of conserving or restoring a piece.

The workplace was quiet and contemplative, which I enjoyed. I was able to focus and work carefully without distraction for long periods of time. I find that careful, meditative work is good for my soul, and it is something I hope to be able to find in my future line of work. With every painting I worked on, I gained a better appreciation for the rich life and history that each work of art has, a better knowledge of the myriad of techniques utilized by artists throughout the centuries, and a better understanding of what it means to see a project through from start to finish. Since I plan to go into the art world after school, this new understanding was a welcome one. My only co-workers were Mr. Milton and his cat, Neo, who made for very fine company. There was very little that I disliked, and I am very grateful to Mr. Milton for making an offer that I could potentially work with him in the future.
Over the summer I worked as an intern at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC in a communications role for the Economic and Health departments. During the time I worked from June through August, the scholars in those departments had an unexpected increase in their workload due to Covid-19. The need for effective Covid-19 policy was concentrated almost entirely on those fields. I was tasked with constructing social media posts for articles and writing virtual event summaries for the website. I also sent the department relevant daily news related to health and economics and completed various data entry projects and reports.

My role required combing through output from AEI’s scholars as well as other think tanks and various news sources. Because AEI doesn’t dictate what its scholars research and write, it was valuable for me to gain an in depth understanding of which qualities cause an analyst to be hired professionally. Even working remotely, I was given opportunities to make connections and work as part of the team.

I enjoyed working at AEI not only because I gained experience in my field of interest, but also because the conversations were free and open. The other interns participating in the program held a wide range of political ideologies. We would often spend free time discussing various topics including cancel culture, campus cultures, free markets and foreign policy in our group chat. These discussions were completely organic and spontaneous, and every contribution was respectful and carefully thought out. This productive approach to discussion was also prevalent in every webinar, podcast, article, and panelist discussion produced by AEI, and seemed to be a central value of the organization as a whole. In a time when partisan polarization is increasing, working at AEI convinced me that it is possible to resist polarizing forces in the political sphere with a higher level of intellectualism and integrity.

Due to covid-19, we were unable to have many interactions with the professional scholars in our fields. Our supervisor informed us that before the decision was made to go online, our desks were already picked out in a nearby space easily accessible for walk by conversations. The change was disappointing to all of us, and I had been looking forward to meeting new scholars and interns every day in the shared lunch room. The experience was still overwhelmingly worthwhile, especially because every opportunity for connection was taken. My supervisor established daily video calls to organize tasks into somewhat arbitrary, but oddly comforting hourly schedules. Large zoom meetings were arranged for all of the interns and we had access to guest speakers, question periods, and optional discussion groups for topics that interested us. We were encouraged to take advantage of one on one resume review sessions with members of the hiring team. We also had social opportunities that allowed for smaller, rotating breakout rooms with interns working in other think tanks in DC.

I would welcome the opportunity to work for AEI again in the future. My goal is to eventually become an economic analyst researching large trends. This specialization is quite broad and could be applied to many organizations including private companies, lobbying firms, intelligence agencies, and nonprofit policy think tanks. AEI has shown me how meaningful change can be affected through independently funded, non-coercive policy analysis. This experience has replaced a vague future plan with a more solidified understanding of what it means to work as a professional Economist. This experience has heightened my enthusiasm for this career path.
My internship was with NIAC (NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts) and took place completely online. Normally, I would have had to drive a few hours every few days to attend team meetings and discuss everyone in the team’s work from that week. But instead, we had the meetings from home. One of the things that I came to discover is that many serendipitous happenings were missed out on. People who may have not been associated directly with my work might have been met and there may have been other opportunities or relationships developed from them, but none of that was able to happen. But I found that even with this drawback, the internship was still full of warmth and opportunity in the relationships I developed with my mentors, the other members of the NIAC team, and the NIAC fellows.

NIAC’s role with respect to NASA is unique and open-minded. The NIAC team tries to fund scientists to develop concepts that are of low technology readiness but are ground-breaking with respect to their potential to innovate or change what was thought possible for space exploration. In this way, NIAC acts as a jump-starter for many—in both a monetary and publicity sense. NIAC has paved its way into being quite a reputable branch of NASA because the NIAC team has proven that innovation is possible, not through one or two contributions of clever scientists, but a whole network of contributions through hundreds of scientists in an interconnected benefit to the scientific community. But Congress must be periodically re-convinced of NIAC’s positive and worthy impact in an economic and scientific way. The main role of this internship was to interview NIAC fellows (scientists who were awarded NIAC funding at some level) and record their progress over the past 10 years.

This is where my St. John’s education directly benefitted my capabilities. My mentor asked me to create my own questions and set up my own schedule for interviews. I basically had to set up the whole operation myself, with a little guidance from my mentor when needed. Had I not developed the soft skills necessary for an independent approach through St. John’s, I may have been much less able to think through how I was going to juggle all the variables at once. Asking pertinent questions is one of the main practices of St. John’s, and that skill had shone through in the thoroughness with which I was able to complete my tasks and stay on the same page with my mentors. I also had a second task with another member of the NIAC team. So, St. John’s also ensured that I would be able handle the pressure of being responsible for so much at once.

Some of the questions were about how their concept grew: how their concept ended up being infused into the status quo, or how they ended up making their concept more technologically ready. Other questions went into their social impact, such as how many students they took under their wing or worked with, how many jobs were created if they started a company based off their NIAC study, or if they started a university organization that focuses on researching their specialty. The interviews were incredible. Every fellow was creative, kind, and enthusiastic, and their concepts really changed my understanding of how quickly mankind’s capacity to investigate space will explode in the coming decades.

The second task was to help my other mentor in ensuring astronaut safety by creating a way to reasonably estimate how much radiation exposure they would get under many different thicknesses of shielding and many different intensities of Solar Particle Events (SPE’s) under certain amounts of time. The main problem, very loosely, is this: there are many SPE’s that have been recorded, all of different strengths. We must have a way to determine how much exposure an astronaut may get under a certain strength SPE. But to do that, we must have a representative SPE that most likely will fit the SPE strength that they are about to encounter. However, none of them in particular will be able to be that representative. Many problems come out of this fact, including the problem of how thick the shielding of our space infrastructure and vehicles ought to be. One flaw of having one SPE as representative can
be exemplified in the following story. One NASA committee was mistakenly choosing one SPE as a representative for design standards for the shielding of everything—the base, the rover, the suit, etc. But the issue is that designing our things to prepare for one SPE only is tricky. If we do that, we may be well prepared in the shielding of the base, but not at all prepared for the lunar rover shielding. So, the astronaut would undergo much more radiation exposure than we can reasonably allow.

There is a health policy concerning how much radiation an astronaut is allowed to have under certain periods of time. There is a lifetime dose limit, a one-year dose limit, and a 30-day dose limit. Part of the importance of this task is that, without a way to reasonably estimate radiation dose, the astronaut can be over-exposed and have short-term effects that may delay or upset the mission. One example is skin blistering. Exposure even below the 30-day dose limit may result in this, which would prevent the astronaut from wearing their space suit for some time. So, part of my task was to understand the real scope, subtlety, and importance of the problem. My first real task was to organize quite a large chart of data which contained the radiation doses of astronauts under 10 different SPE’s, with several different points of radiation exposure (immune system, skin, heart, etc.), under seven different shielding thicknesses, just to name a few variables. I had to rearrange the data in Excel to make it easily search-able for ease-of-access.

Then, my mentor taught me a new statistical way of comprehending the SPE data that would end up allowing us to create a time-evolution model of radiation exposure during a representative event. The new way of comprehending a “representative event” would no longer be any one event, but a percentage grouping of the total events that reached a certain percent of dose limit under a certain time. So, if we chose the 20th percentile group to be the representative, that is akin to saying that 20 percent of events we have measured will have reached all the dose limits at a sooner time, and 80 percent will have reached them at a later time. With this new way, we can say whether the upcoming SPE will be within a certain percentile of the group, and so assess the probable strength and radiation exposure of the astronaut. I had to work out for myself what the definition of a representative SPE could be, and I had to have many Johnnie-like conversations with my mentor in order to understand the complexity behind this new way of understanding a “representative event”.

The St. John’s mathematics and lab program had certainly prepared me for this kind of work. Otherwise, I would not have the slightest clue what it means to come up with a definition worthy of mathematical precision, nor would I have been able to speak on these things with a fraction of the care and attention required to complete the task with someone. Once my mentor created a time-evolution Excel table, I had run as many iterations of data as I could so as to have the representative event dose times and dose amounts recorded. That way, organizing the data would be the only thing he would have had to do. This would have helped rid him of the most tedious part of the task, but the internship ended before I was able to complete this last thing.

All in all, I would absolutely work for NIAC if I had no other plans. The team is made of excellent people in every way. I felt at home within the first week, although I never physically met any of them. Covid-19 was truly the only thing I disliked about the internship. There were of course many moments of discomfort and doubt, but these were only steppingstones to feelings of confidence and ease. At first, it was as if I didn’t believe the scientists or the NIAC team were even human. But every one of them proved themselves to be welcoming, interesting, and fulfilled people. My academic and career goals have changed because of my mentors. They gave me fantastic career advice and open-mindedly accepted that I had more than one path to consider. I am planning on going into government contracting now and going to the University of Maryland part time in order to get a second bachelor’s in physics. The government job will enable financial security as well as allow me the funding to conduct my own experiments from home. This way, I will not be bound to research along the pre-determined lines of an organization. As great as organizations like NIAC are, interning with them made me realize that sometimes scientists need to be self-starters. Even the most sci-fi organizations like NIAC can feel restricted when it comes to what they will accept to be funded, and some fellows I had interviewed were not able to continue their work for lack of funding. I don’t want to get caught in the same trap, so it would be wise to take their examples as warnings.
This summer I worked as an archives intern with the education department at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia. My project was to process a variety of Center paraphernalia relating to play productions, education, and administration dating back to the 1980’s. I also edited video files of professional theatrical performances at Staunton’s Blackfriars Playhouse and uploaded them to an online database designed for educational purposes. Mostly, these were videos of entire plays which were edited and packaged for viewing by students, but I sometimes had to isolate snippets of individual scenes. During the last few weeks of my internship, I critiqued several online college-level Shakespeare courses and wrote a report describing their strengths and weaknesses, and why they would or would not appeal to me as a student.

Staunton has long been home to the American Shakespeare Center, so it was fortunate that my internship was on-site. Most importantly, I got to get out of my parent’s house and experience living by myself for the first time. I bought and cooked my meals and I was responsible for my own living space. Staunton is located a considerable distance inland, so this was my first foray living away from the ocean, as well as my first time living away from New England. I got around mostly by walking, so I got to know the town and its people well. Becoming familiar with the unique characteristics of the area made me feel that I was doing something new and getting out of my comfort zone.

More pertinent to my internship, my work was more engaging than it would have been if forced to be remote. Being able to meet, work, and interact with people physically allowed for a more comfortable and intimate work environment. I got to know my coworkers better and develop deeper connections. Generally, there were three of us in the office on a given day, and I worked closely and communicated with my supervisor each day. One day I was tasked with asking local businesses to put up posters for upcoming shows. Almost all of them gladly accepted and I was able to explore the town and meet many new people, making for one of the most pleasant experiences of my summer. Being restricted to a remote internship would have rendered all these things impossible.

While I enjoyed being on-site, the internship itself wasn’t stimulating. My daily tasks felt mundane and repetitive, although I was able to watch snippets of performances while working with video files. Since my work didn’t require any deep thinking, I generally wasn’t able to apply skills I’ve developed at St. John’s. When analyzing online courses for my last project, I did think about how I would feel about them as a student. Still, this wasn’t intellectually demanding. Early in the internship, I asked myself what the point was of saving so many insignificant papers and sorting them all so carefully. A few weeks into the internship, my supervisor sent me an article about archiving theatrical materials and how the study of them aids scholars, historians, acting companies, and theatres themselves. Even though the internship lacked deep intellectual exploration, I did gain an appreciation for the Center’s importance and understood that I was doing something meaningful in the theatrical world.

While I learned valuable things during my summer, returning to the American Shakespeare Center as an intern wouldn’t be my first choice. My time at St. John’s made me aware of my own interest in deeper thinking and analysis of problems as opposed to work that is done just to move on to the next job. Perhaps there are more fitting opportunities for me at the Center, but I would first look elsewhere for new work. Before this summer, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to pursue as a career, and I still don’t know for certain. However, I do know that I want to do something that will challenge me and be intellectually stimulating, rather than something that’s easy to do but not fulfilling. If I didn’t get very much out of my internship, I at least learned that valuable lesson.
This summer, I interned at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater, MD. I worked with a small team in an ocean chemistry lab, studying Coastal Ocean Acidification in the Rhode River. I worked remotely, so most of my time was spent on Zoom calls to discuss our data and attending weekly lab meetings. I also spent a lot of time going through the historical data the lab had been collecting since 2014, as well as reading scientific literature to get ideas about what kind of experiments and testing methods our lab could utilize.

Working remotely framed most of my experience and limited what kind of undertakings were actually realistic for me to do. Before the pandemic, while I was in communication with my lab mentor about the project, the lab had in mind a different project for me to work on where I would be spending a lot of time at the river collecting samples and then running them back up to the lab to test them. Once it was time for me to actually start work, though, we had to pivot and find ways that I could be productive remotely. I do not know what it would have been like to actually work in the lab, but I definitely feel like I still had a lot of responsibility and agency in forming and executing my project. I also feel like I contributed something legitimate to the lab—I know that they will use my work to take the next steps in our research. I bonded and worked very closely with the other people in my lab and at SERC, and I think that our unique circumstances gave us a special sense of camaraderie. There was a lot of work that I did on my own, and the learning curve was steep, but I relied on learning from my lab mates about the research process and how to address the many problems our lab was facing.

Reflecting on the type of work I was asked to do, my St. John’s experience proved invaluable. Reading complex scientific literature was a huge part of my job, and I was in a prime position to synthesize that information, report back to my lab about its content, and utilize what I had read to influence our methodology. In many ways, it is similar to what I do in my laboratory classes; I had already had so much experience with thinking critically about complicated scientific and mathematical texts. Communication of ideas and facts became an essential part of my job, as well as knowing how to ask the right questions to understand something. Having not had much experience with the chemistry I was reading about, in particular near-shore carbonate chemistry, I had to learn as I went along. But I was able to treat most of our lab meetings like a Seminar and work with my mentors to understand the fundamental problems confronting us.

SERC felt familiar to me because of how well I was able to integrate my educational experiences into it. I loved how open everyone was to inquiry and how committed they seemed to helping me understand the project and succeed in it. The internship program also held events for interns, so I got to know most of the people who work at SERC, including researchers in other labs and people who work in communications. Eventually, I want to work as a scientific researcher, but I also have an interest in writing and journalism, and I’ve been searching for a way to combine these two fields. The exposure to the communications department at SERC was a really important aspect of my summer because I saw for the first time how two passions of mine might interact. With special programming designed to show us all of these options, I feel that there are many opportunities at SERC and beyond for me to pursue my goals in life. I would love to work at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center after graduating from St. John’s. I see myself continuing to work in my lab and furthering the research from this summer, and maybe working in the communications department as well. My summer experience was truly transformative, proving to me that I want to do research and also inspiring me to craft the career I want, which may involve combining different fields that inspire me.
This summer I had the privilege of working as a Communications Intern with the Light House (A Homeless Prevention Support Center) in Annapolis, Maryland. As an intern, I had many responsibilities. I had weekly training sessions with the administration so I could learn about the many positions that keep the Light House a well-oiled machine. It was wonderful to get to know the Volunteer Administrator through these calls as she guided me through topics on all Light House’s projects, and volunteer positions, and showed me how they contribute to the mission of Light House. I also observed a few classes offered to clients and community members in their Building Employment Success Training (B.E.S.T.) classes. The classes were culinary training courses so that clients who enroll can become prepared to join the world of culinary arts in the workforce. Following the observation of these classes, I wrote a report on the class that was published on their website. This led to the larger opportunity of writing many personal stories for the Light House, helping me step fully into the organization as a “communications” intern. I conducted many phone interviews and wrote personal stories; for example, I wrote one on how their resource center is adjusting to the pandemic, and my most recent piece covered a 7-year-old who collected 900 pounds of food from his neighborhood to donate to the Light House. This was a deeply fulfilling part of my job, as I was able to develop my writing skills and my topics were meaningful to me.

Some of the more technical responsibilities I had was being a part of the approval and editorial process of my stories with the Public Relations representative of Light House. She was also wonderful and a great support during the writing process. The Workforce Grants Administrator was my mentor throughout the internship, and she assigned me a project that would help clients and the vulnerable populations of the community, learn how to use technology. I produced, filmed, and edited a “technology 101” video, explaining the basics of a computer, and though it is a small offering, I believe it will help those who need assistance entering into the complicated technology era of today. As a cherry on top, I was assigned some readings to help me further understand the purpose of the Light House. One of them was Richard Rothstein’s “The Color of Law” which covered topics such as systemic segregation in the real-estate and property business.

Overall, it was a deeply fruitful experience, and I was excited to do these projects as I knew it was going to help vulnerable populations of my community. My job was actually enhanced by the pandemic, as the stories I wrote were in efforts to keep the community “in the know” about the state of the Light House in such a tumultuous time. My experience at St. John’s has shaped me into a true conversationalist and I had the wonderful privilege to utilize this quality while getting to know my mentors and the administration at the Light House. The staff was so inspiring and kept me focused on all the projects, as each one served a greater purpose than just the task or deadline itself—it helped those in need directly. I am grateful to St. John’s College and those involved in the Hodson Trust, as it allowed me a meaningful summer and further guided me into my love for non-profit and community development work, as a future career.
As a teaching fellow in the Civilizations program at the Key School in Annapolis, my responsibilities were twofold. Generally, four days a week I helped co-teach a 90-minute literature section of ninth-graders. On about half of these class days, we had one group for the whole 90 minutes, breaking the lesson up into different activities. On the other days, one group of students would come to our classroom for the first half of the block, and then a different group would come to cover the same material during the second half. For many of these split blocks, I taught the second group alone while the head teacher observed. A few times, I also substituted for teachers who had to miss a day of class.

During the semester we read Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, and *Beowulf*—it was such a treat to reread these books with young students encountering them for the first time. Key has high expectations for its students; we seldom skipped anything, and the texts were always faithful translations by well-regarded scholars. Classes were held as something of a hybrid between a St. John’s-style seminar and a traditional high school lecture. Usually the teacher and I would begin class by going over some of the content of the day’s reading, clarifying characters, plot points, authorial details, and historical background. Much of the ensuing discussion was driven by the students, who were usually instructed to prepare questions in advance, which were just as often directed at their classmates as at the teachers. The discussion was always grounded in specific passages from the text. We had many stimulating and enlightening conversations this way. Toward the end of the semester I was also helping a good deal with the grading of reflections and quizzes.

The other main feature of my internship was conducting sessions in the writing center. I was assigned four or five students who came in for mandatory tutoring hours several times a week, but my sessions were also open for others to drop in. In the writing center I got to work with students from all grades and on different parts of the curriculum. Key students are expected to write several long papers per semester, covering, in addition to the ancient literature listed above, books like *The Stranger*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Alchemist*, Plato’s *Phaedo*, and *Prometheus Bound*, along with many historical documents to accompany the main texts. During these sessions I helped students solidify the habits of effective reading and note-taking, proper citation of sources, and the elements of a well-written essay.

Working with students in the Civilizations program was an easy transition from the Graduate Institute—their literature curriculum is largely a subset of our own. Most of the questions I presented to the high schoolers at Key were the same questions I had asked about the same books at the St. John’s seminar table. When I was asked to give my views on particular points from these books, they were likewise usually thoughts that had arisen during my own classes. Most of all, St. John’s prepared me for an unmediated encounter with great works of literature, bringing my own questions and coming up with my own answers—the kind of thing often required from a high school teacher, who is asked to mediate the encounter between his own students and the text. In turn, the Key School fellowship also enhanced my ability to participate in St. John’s classes, by honing my ability to ask clear questions that promote fruitful discussions.

It also taught me something important about my career plans. Though I’ve learned that teaching high school is not necessarily my dream job, it has helped clarify my thinking about PhD programs. With such a competitive college teaching job market, many PhDs end up at private high schools instead. If this should happen to me, I now have a good idea of what such a job would be like, and I think I would be well prepared to begin that kind of career.
Allegra Hall ‘22
Élan Ensemble
Annapolis, Maryland

Allegra (on the left) with mentor Elissa Edwards of Elan Productions.

The work that I undertook during my time with the Élan Ensemble demanded an aptitude for civil, creative, and constructive discussion along with an ability to establish and maintain correspondence with a plethora of personalities. I felt well-equipped to deal with most every situation I was faced with because of my time at the College.

In my time as an intern with the Élan Ensemble, I:

- Created, grew, and continue to maintain several social media accounts across several platforms
- Became familiar with online programs including MyMusicStaff, Patreon, Dropbox, Airtable, and Squarespace in order to facilitate online growth
- Revamped elanensemble.org and expanded social media accounts by 300%
- Participated in concert planning & execution
- Participated in the Élan Salon Parlor series, which received much positive attention from the Annapolis community and gave me the opportunity to perform on a public stage
- Chair ed meetings with the artistic and executive director, as well as delegated tasks to them in order to complete specific projects
- Gained experience in development: wrote and sent out personalized requests for donations for the release of Elan’s debut album & raised $12,000 over the course of the summer through individual, personal donations exclusively
- Created and organized specific Élan branding content i.e. font packs, photography, art etc. for use in online branding
- Received weekly voice lessons and continued my classical training

It is worth mentioning, too, that several opportunities have been made manifest over this past summer: I’ve gotten the chance to perform, recorded music, and have created incredible personal & professional contacts, etc. The most notable of these achievements has been my consequent instatement as an intern at the Washington National Cathedral. I’m currently under the direction of Canon Michael McCarthy and will be a part of the music department there doing much of the same work I had done with the Élan Ensemble this past summer. This is an incredible opportunity that only exists for me as a direct result of my studies and experiences at St. John’s. I have not had an extensive amount of formal musical education, and all of my administrative skills are self-taught. My time at St. John’s has shaped the person that I am in such a way that I am able to take the intuition and talent I have developed and turn it into a career; even in a field that is highly competitive.

This brings me to the most important connection I made over the summer. Elissa, my mentor, has become one of the most influential people in my life. Our time together was accompanied by incredible amounts of personal, professional, and physical growth. At the beginning of the summer, she asked me to identify my goals, both personal and professional, and during the course of my internship she was committed to helping me reach them. This was intensified by the fact that I was living with her for a time—we learned repertoire I’d always dreamed of learning, started exercising, and learned to cook. Her support of me motivated me to help her build her business and brand: I felt as though we were able to invest in each other. I felt like the work I was doing had greater stakes and was somehow more important because of the nature of the business. We were committed to making ourselves better so we could create better art.
The intimate nature of my time working with Elissa meant that my work and personal life became somewhat inseparable. This was in no way a negative; however, I am so much more aware now about what it means to have work/life boundaries, and why it is important to have them. This is of course, complicated greatly by the way in which we are all required to work in the era of COVID.

I am continuing to work with the Élan Ensemble over the course of my gap year. In our discussions about fundraising over the summer, we talked about creating an endowment that would serve as my wages if I were to decide to return to Élan in a professional capacity post-graduation. I feel so grateful for the funding the Hodson program provides—the opportunities resulting from my time this summer has changed the course of my life.
Isabella Hougie ‘22  
Maryland Office of the Public Defender  
Annapolis Office  
Annapolis, Maryland

I knew going into the internship that the occupation of a public defender requires passion. The odds are stacked against public defenders in many respects: their workloads are bursting with cases; the people that they defend nearly always face one form or another of prejudice, making it difficult to do them justice. Without passion, somebody attempting to do this job would collapse.

Until I met Heather Tierney, Public Defender, and my mentor, I hadn’t seen this kind of passion embodied. Heather handles an unimaginable amount of responsibility. Even after working with her for nearly two months, I still cannot envision the extent to which she looks out for everyone. Heather jokes that the entire county jail has her cell phone number. She has clients calling her for all kinds of assurance about their cases. She leaves nobody—even the families of her clients—feeling like they aren’t with her every step of the way. I’ve seen her lecture a nineteen-year-old receiving his first drug related misdemeanor on the dangers of drugs, and I saw that nineteen-year-old take to heart what she said. I’ve seen the look of gratitude on a client’s face after a motions hearing in which Heather argued for him with such obvious and deep persuasion.

Heather takes care of people. This is the core of her job and what attracts me most to it. She takes care of the most vulnerable members of society.

As a mentor, Heather lets me work hands-on. I summarize documents related to a given case, conduct research to find cases that support her arguments, and write up various legal documents for her, among other things. I also attend court with her once a week and work with her in the office also once weekly.

My St. John’s education prepared me for the rigorous amount of reading required for the internship.

Going forward, Heather is allowing me to continue this internship throughout the semester. Heather’s passion is infectious. I love that the job combines the analytical side of my mind (which St. John’s strengthened), the ability to work face to face with all kinds of people, the element of performance—of presenting an argument to a courtroom—and lastly, a spirit of striving upwards, persistently and always digging one’s way out of the dirt.

I aspire to be a good Public Defender like Heather. It will exercise a lot of the good in myself that I want to be central to my character.
The New York University Press is a publishing company that mainly focuses on publishing books about the humanities, a topic that is very closely related to our St. John’s education. When I first secured this internship, I was so excited to be living in New York City during the summer and do all the fun things that I had imagined but as it did with everyone else, the Covid-19 pandemic changed all my plans. Not only could I not go to NYC, I had to go home, to Turkey. Although this was a huge obstacle for my professional life that hadn’t started in the US, the NYU Press team was really collaborative and helpful in turning my internship into a remote one. So that is what we did.

At the very beginning of my internship, I had a virtual meeting with my co-workers and supervisor to go over first of all what the publicity department does, what a publicist does and what kind of projects I would be working on. It was a great start to this internship as my experiences before this were all marketing related. This intro to publicity kind of worked like a flash lesson for me and really intrigued my curiosity for the field. One thing that was very closely tied to St. John’s during this internship was of course, reading books. The very first project that I worked on was going through the list of all the upcoming titles and researching a few of them. This research included reading the book itself, researching the author and creating press releases for each one. To have such a huge project be my first one was an amazing experience to figure out how working with a 7-hour time difference would look like for my internship, and it turned out to work out perfectly for me and for NYU Press.

With this project and the others I did, such as creating email marketing materials, arranging spreadsheets for the warehouse to send out books to reviewers, contacting magazine editors and podcast hosts and pulling review quotes from various publications about our titles, I got to see a vast variety of things that the publicity department at a publishing company does. Working remotely, having complete control over when and how I work and my own work environment has improved my skills in a professional setting. It showed me how adaptable one should be and how to keep myself motivated to get the job done in the best way possible.

This internship has taught me so much about not just publishing a book, but launching any product and what it takes to successfully do so. In my time working with NYU Press, I also have been working on launching a new brand as an entrepreneur, and the skills I gained from my internship have proven themselves to be extremely valuable. It has steered my interests in the professional world toward being more independent and creative, to things like product development and launching process management. I am very excited to put my new skillsets and information to use in my future professional endeavors.

The one really important lesson this summer internship has taught me is that no matter how bad the situation might be, as long as you’re willing to put in the effort and work, there is a way to surpass all the odds and obstacles. I’m so grateful for the amazing ladies at the NYU Press Marketing & Publicity departments for showing me how things are done and what it really takes to publish a book. Besides improving my overall organizational skills, this internship has shown me how important interpersonal communication between you and your co-workers is as well as how important it is to have an effective way of communicating with people you don’t know. This is an experience that I will always carry with me in the future both professionally and personally.
My internship experience at Georgetown MS and Neuroimmunology Center helped me to gain a better understanding of a career in medicine. My main responsibility was to coordinate education programs for newly-diagnosed patients. Due to COVID-19, the outreach program had to find new platforms online. My tasks included researching about online platforms that are suitable for medical teams, communicating with patients, managing RSVPs and collecting feedback questions and other information. Other than the outreach project, I also shadowed patient calls virtually. The opportunity allowed me to listen to their perspective and to understand MS from a more direct point of view. I also attended weekly department meetings and participated in creating online patient surveys. Attending weekly department meetings and conferences with medical companies taught me so much about MS. I even attended a few sessions of a Neuroradiology conference during which the doctors examined images of the brain and spinal lesions. Although the pandemic prevented the team from meeting in person the adjustment to online meetings enabled me to be more proactive and communicate better with my team.

Studying at St. John’s definitely helped me to develop better communications skills. I found great similarity with the typical St. John’s classroom environment and the experience of working in a team with other interns. I was able to work with others to combine our different suggestions and ideas into a concrete plan. Moreover, my freshman lab tutorial helped me to understand the science behind MS. One of the topics that my team often brought up during meetings was the cause of MS. Technically, while the systems of MS are known, the medical world is still unsure of the cause of MS. I remembered that in freshman lab, one of the greatest challenges we encountered when we were “observing living beings” was to find the cause of things. We were always trying to look beyond the appearance and to ask the “why?” question: why does making different cuts on planarian result in different regeneration? The tutorial inspired me to see science as a way to look beyond the apparent, to seek the cause of things, and to tirelessly continue to seek the cause of the cause. This is the unyielding spirit of understanding things deeper and deeper and never being completely satisfied with an answer. This spirit is present in a similar way in the MS world in that the researchers and doctors have been trying to find the final cause that can be traced back and develop target treatments. The internship inspired me to look into future career opportunities that combine research and solving real-world problems.
This summer I interned under an attorney at the Annapolis Office of the Public Defender. I chose this internship because I often hear people speak ill of Public Defense. I knew something had to be amiss. Public Defense is infamous for being hard work with little reward. I have heard comments such as “You’re defending the guilty” or “The pay is poor.” These comments dehumanize both the victims and the counselors. My mentor quickly disproved the dreary image that comes to mind when we think of Public Defense.

She introduced herself to me by saying the best way to cope with Public Defense is a dark sense of humor. She was right. When you converse daily about homicide, laughter eases the tension. Her next piece of advice was “get used to disappointment.” She was right again. There were a few times where I spent many hours working on a motion only for it to be denied. There were others when someone violated their parole and faced consequences. It was often difficult to witness. Sometimes, people worked hard to get themselves out of the system, and they succeeded. For me, those stories proved the merit of Public Defense.

Since my internship was remote, I never got to interact with our clients in person. This was disappointing. One of the things I looked forward to most was interacting with defendants in person. I think it would be valuable to watch how my mentor advised her clients. Especially because the law is esoteric. I wanted to see how a professional explained court proceedings to someone unfamiliar with them. I have yet to visit the courthouse. But I hope to soon.

One of the projects I assisted with is going to trial in October. Over the summer, I did legal research, calls, and discovery pertaining to this case. While I cannot share many details, it is an assault case getting appealed. When we go to trial, I will observe jury selection, sit with my mentor during court, and watch due process take its course. I am elated to have such an opportunity.

It was difficult to get an assessment of the usual office dynamics because of the remote work. Though when I listened in to court, my mentor would always let me know who the harsh judges were or what prosecutors were hard get on with. My assessment of the Anne Arundel County legal system is that most people want defendants and victims to go forward with a sense that Justice had been done.

My mentor worked hard to give our clients the simplest path toward leaving the system. Some paths are more complicated than others. She works long hours to make sure this is a reality for each of her clients.

I do not think I am done working with my mentor. She has so much more to teach me about the value of Public Defense. Though I am unsure whether Public Defense is right for me, I know now that I want to pursue a career in law. Specifically, I want to work in a place where I feel impactful. My mentor spoke of loving litigation because it was exciting. I know that whatever avenue of law I pursue I want that adrenaline rush she spoke of when I argue a case. It is also important for me to do work that aligns with my morals. They are not something I am willing to sacrifice.

I often found myself struggling to see how my education played a role in the work I was doing for the OPD. Upon reflection, I realize that my ability to read a text critically and build a logical argument are instrumental in the legal field. When I am feeling meta, I wonder at the nature of law. I look on in awe at how laws shape every aspect of daily life.
This summer I was lucky enough to pursue an internship with the Folkways record label at the Smithsonian. Moses Asch, a first generation Polish recording engineer, founded the label with a vision of an industry much unlike the one he found himself in. The attraction of smash hits and radio stardom drove recording scouts out of the hills and into the city by the late 1940s, and the rise of a new rock, country, and jazz loomed over the American musical experience as we knew it. It's often hard to realize the importance of the times one lives in, but Asch understood that music was making its final move away from a personal, intimate form. To counteract this commercialization, Asch used his record label to capture various shots of the American, and later, international, folk scene from the 40s all the way up through the 80s. Neil Allen Marks of the NYT summarizes his legacy best: “Folkways Records was for folklorists and musicians the Talmudic source for much primary material. Its founder, Moses Asch, may have more to do with the preservation of folk music than any single person in this country.”

So while you’re cooped up in your house for five months, it’s rather comforting to keep a higher purpose in mind. Especially when you’re working in the IT & Web Development department. The purely online format lends itself to monotony, but, with Moe in mind, the music made it all worth it. My job was to update the collection’s metadata. This data includes all the descriptive elements of a track like the artist name, track title, track language, and album title, but also includes more ambiguous elements like the genre classification, featured artist name, and track title translation. I could identify the majority of the descriptive data by listening to an album and reading the accompanying liner notes, but some albums would throw me a curveball even in these simple departments. The breadth and variety of the Folkways label meant that not every recording would come nice and ready to be labelled. Some came with artist names like “Shoeshine boy” or “Street Corner Vegetable Peddlers”, but sometimes we wouldn’t even get that and the name came simply as “N/A”. Gaps in descriptive precision were most common among indigenous and deep folk collections because the majority of them were not recorded by an ethnomusicologist, but by an individual who took a liking to the music. This required me to do some detective work to track down the artist so they received the credit they were due. This could turn into a wild goose chase amongst the more obscure selections. Identifying track language by ear could be an asymptotic task as well. Many traditional African and South American recordings only list a country of origin, which opens up a breadth of possible dialects and regional languages to choose from. Google Translate’s auto-identify feature became a good friend of mine.

Genre classification was by far the most interesting part of the job. It was my responsibility to categorize the music using Folkways-specific genre labels and industry-standard Digital Service Provider (Spotify, Apple Music, Google Play, etc.) genre labels. The Folkways labels were always precise and descriptive because, in the event that an album doesn’t fit into a pre-established container, the recording engineers at Folkways had the liberty to invent a brand new one. Translating these meditated, exhaustive labels into generic corporate qualifiers proved a daunting task. For instance, Folkways has a genre for Black Spiritual music that the DSPs do not, which summons the question of how to approach Folkways’ vast collection of African-American traditional music. In industry classification, the “Spiritual” sub-genre only exists under the “New Age” genre, so to classify it as such would be wholly inaccurate. I could label it as “Traditional”, but I run the risk of losing such foundational recordings amongst the broad connotations of this unspecific heading. I
could label it as “Blues”, as these spirituals are the direct predecessor of the American blues movement and share many elements with it, but to lump a distinct style in with what it’s destined to become felt like a revisionist approach to the history told by the music. Any choice I could make offers a disservice to the music in one way or another, so I had to swallow my appreciation of specificity to do the job correctly. I often discussed these issues with my boss, a 25-year veteran of Folkways, conversations that left me with a new appreciation for the devotion and dedication that the seniors of this craft possess. But even with lifelong expertise, some questions brought up by my work remained unanswerable.

To determine whether an artist should be listed as a featured artist or a track artist, I had to make a similar unprecedented choice. Because many recording engineers own the rights to the music they record, I would come across albums where the actual artist that is playing was labelled as second fiddle to the owner of their music. I was faced with the interesting, but painful dilemma of whether I should categorize the music under the name that the industry and culture is familiar with, thus allowing the piece to easily mesh with the existent label it has in other catalogues, or whether I credit the music to the artist playing, which in some cases means creating an entirely new artist page for classic works. If I pursue the former, it will be more easily recommended and recognized by the algorithms that DSPs use, thus massively improving the exposure that the music gets, but I uphold the exploitative practice of stealing credit which is properly owed to the artist. If I pursue the latter, I break the cycle that has plagued the music industry for generations, but I risk losing the music to the impersonal authority that determines if an artist sinks or floats in the modern era. So, proper credit or proper exposure? It’s an impossible choice, pending a conversation with the artists themselves. I leaned towards the credit side, but my stomach would churn at the thought of it going unappreciated.

My categorical work reminded me of the way a St. John’s seminar functions. Although our tutors have devoted their lives to the subjects at hand, seminar still provokes questions that no authority can answer. One can become easily frustrated at this fact as the seminar attempts to grasp some kind of solid ground, because it can feel like you’re doing a disservice to the work by compartmentalizing and analyzing the issues within it. As I learned in freshman year, however, the very point of seminar is to compromise with your conceptions and reservations in order to accomplish a higher task of understanding. Do we always hit the mark? Rarely. But does that make the experience of wrestling with the issues any less valuable? Absolutely not. We have to fit amorphous ideas into neat containers if we hope to establish any kind of commonality through them. So, while it’s easy to feel like a child struggling to sort its baby blocks, I had to keep the higher task in mind so the music wouldn’t be lost in the technological ether. I’d like to think Moses Asch himself had a similar vision that kept him working through the sterile and profiteering nature of the music industry of his day.

I would love to work with Folkways again given the chance. I got a fascinating look at all the cogs required to make a nonprofit record label run through the weekly staff meetings. Although my perspective was from a technology-heavy position, I developed a comprehensive view of the managerial, curatorial, communicative and financial roles through my conversations with the heads and interns of the respective departments. I’d never considered myself someone who enjoys archival work until this internship. I kind of viewed it as belonging to the drab academic world that Indiana Jones flees from when he hops out of his university window, on to bigger and better adventures. Of course, the aforementioned bigger and better adventure was more my speed. After this internship, however, I can’t help but think about all the lowly interns that have to categorize the shiny artifacts produced by such a belligerent and undisciplined escapade. Does that sound vehemently dull as I write it? Perhaps. But if I had mislabeled a piece or erred an artist name, I ran the risk of keeping these beautiful traditions of art from thousands, if not millions, of people, or shorting a creator out of credit for their life’s work. The details matter. Folkways helped me see that in a modern light. I’m planning to pursue an internship with the North Carolina Museum of Art next summer, and one with the National Archives the one after that, choices inspired by the experience I had over Zoom and Excel this summer. I’d like to pursue something more along the lines of curatorial work in the future, as my position was quite categorical, but I’d jump at the chance to do this type of work again under whatever lens it presents itself.
I spent the summer interning remotely for Kansas City, Missouri’s Department of Long-Range Planning. When I started, they had just kicked off the two-year process of updating and replacing the city’s Comprehensive Plan. Their goal over the summer was to gather as much input as possible from citizens, neighborhoods, and other organized groups. With the pandemic in full swing, months of planned outreach had to be reworked. My duties would have included attending dozens of neighborhood events and speaking directly with concerned citizens to gather input on the new plan. With everything needing to be moved online, I focused mainly on data collection. I researched all the other plans for city departments, as well as Comprehensive Plans for other cities in the country. This data was collected into two large spreadsheets where I was responsible for tagging and organizing each recommendation.

Additionally, I was pulled into meetings on innovating online outreach, especially through social media. As a person much younger than all the staff, I had valuable insight on how social media and apps are used by the up and coming generations. Being a Johnnie was especially helpful for these conversations about outreach to citizens. The Comprehensive Plan needed input from all areas of the city and all demographics, but now nearly all of it had to come from virtual sources. My experience with St. John’s style discussions helped elevate me in meetings concerning equity and access. It brought me a unique perspective at the table when brainstorming new ways to reach out.

Working remotely decreased my interactions with citizens but gave me constant access to city employees for guidance. I attended weekly Microsoft Teams meetings for the department, the Comprehensive Plan project, and the communication team. Between these, I had frequent one-on-one calls with co-workers to discuss my specific tasks. Several of them were particularly proactive in making sure I was involved and aware of all the moving parts that were obscured by only working virtually. They made any moment they could a learning moment for me and were free with advice about the urban planning field.

The work environment was very comfortable with a clear horizontal organizational structure. My supervisor was the department head, and he encouraged all meetings to be open conversations. This made it easy for me to jump in and participate. There was a clear passion for the work throughout the office; employees were interested not just in doing well but also doing good. That will be important for me to look for in my future employment, as I am interested in planning for the impact it can have on people and communities. A challenge was the number of projects going on at once. The department handles a city’s worth of planning, and this means every employee (myself included) has a variety of tasks on their plate at once. Deadlines are rolling and often abstract, which made it difficult to prioritize projects or budget time properly.

Overall, my experience with the department was very positive. I could see myself working here in the future or in another city with a similarly structured department. City governments are not hiring much currently, especially with the pandemic, so it would be a big question to end up somewhere in particular. My larger career goals have been somewhat focused by this internship: while I appreciate all the supplemental data work I was able to do as a remote intern, I would like to work in an environment where I can be on the front side of things helping and working with constituents. In the future, I will have to explore whether federal or non-profit employment will achieve this better.
Wilson Redfield ‘21  
Historic Annapolis Foundation  
Annapolis, Maryland

My internship over the summer of 2020 was in the PR and Marketing department of Historic Annapolis. I was mentored by Carrie Kiewitt, Senior Vice President of Membership, Communications, and Engagement. Due to COVID 19, much of the work I did for Historic Annapolis was remote, usually filling out event calendars, updating spreadsheets, and writing press releases. To supplement this online work, I occasionally did jobs in the William Paca gardens to get it ready for reopening and any PR events held there. One such event that I was a part of was a micro wedding photoshoot. This event showed me the networking and effort that has to go into something like convincing people it’s okay even in the middle of a pandemic to have in-person weddings. Besides this photoshoot, I got a good look at the sales aspect of marketing with the annual plant sale hosted by Historic Annapolis. This sale took a great deal of organization to pull off both in making sure that people knew the event was still happening and in organizing the contact-free delivery and online store that replaced the usual way of doing things.

As Historic Annapolis began to open its locations and offices, I did end up doing some in-person work in the office. For the most part, this was a good thing as it allowed for easier communication between myself and my mentor and allowed me to experience a little of what my internship would have looked like were it not for COVID. Where I think the office did not excel, however, was in teaching me new skills. I believe I learned more in my time doing remote work by watching online webinars on things such as Facebook marketing and the benefits of using Shopify for small business than I got out of my three or so weeks in the Historic Annapolis office. There was not as much feedback as I might have liked and the tasks I did complete were mostly small writings and filling out excel sheets, both things I have plenty of experience with. It was also hard to interact with most of my coworkers due to social distancing and my limited time in the office. I don’t think that I would have had a similar experience if COVID had not happened as, without it, there would have been more time for me to learn what I wanted to from those around me. Historic Annapolis was also forced to cancel several of its biggest PR projects, which would have provided me with more experiences akin to the plant sale and photoshoot, which I consider the internship’s highpoints.

The writing I did for Historic Annapolis was, I believe, greatly influenced by St John’s if only because all the writing I do now is done in a St John’s fashion. It seemed to me that the same effort that I make in my papers to "sell" my ideas to my tutors applies to marketing and press releases in particular. However, I did have to adapt to make the writing more descriptive and less abstract than I might typically as the target audience for a press release is rarely as knowledgeable about the subject in question as a St John’s tutor.

Without question, this was an eye-opening experience for me and has had me sit back and reflect on my career path and, in particular graduate school. Before I had any business experience, I was only considering law for a career. Now though I have begun to seriously research business schools, something I would not have considered before this summer.
Nicholas Thorp ‘20  East Oaks Studio  Cary, NC

This summer I participated in an art business internship with East Oaks Studio in Cary, North Carolina. East Oaks Studio is a small community of realist painters who work together both to train young artists and host online video workshops to promote education in classical realist visual arts.

In my internship, I focused on the operations side of the business. When I arrived, they were in the middle of migrating their entire tutorial video library to a streaming platform, a project they had hoped to finish before I had arrived. To assist them, I went over around 200 hours of video content—although I only had to watch enough for the purposes of writing—in order to rewrite the video descriptions which had never been standardized. Before I started, descriptions ranged from several paragraphs with in-depth background on the guest artists to three bullet points. I reworked all of them to have the same voice and be more insightful to our target audience. Additionally, I participated in discussions of marketing for the platform and how we were going to release it on the market. Further, as I had some work experience in web design, I was able to apply that to formatting the streaming platform to make the styling consistent with their branding.

Another aspect of the internship was that I managed four days of livestreams—one for a free portrait painting tutorial and a series of three sessions for a paid workshop featuring a guest artist. My responsibilities included booking models, selecting dates, setting up the film studio, assisting with film equipment, asking questions, and controlling the different video feeds.

Beyond operations work, I was also able to develop my technical skill in drawing. Each Friday was dedicated to doing a series of drawing exercises to sharpen my artistic eye and draw more accurately. Then, I would also stay after nearly every other day of the week to continue working on my projects. All of this culminated in a skull that I drew over about four weeks, finishing halfway through the last day of my internship. In the past, I have always thought of drawing as capturing a flat image in the same way a photograph represents a Humean visual sensation on a piece of paper. For this drawing project however, I was tasked with conceptualizing form qua form, treating the task of drawing as rendering or sculpting that form on paper, forcing myself to see the flat drawing as truly three-dimensional. This was extremely relevant to my Senior Essay which explored Thomas Reid’s critique of how Hume reduces impressions to mere sensation. In a way, this new philosophy of drawing was a natural extension of what I’d written on! The final product was a highly rendered drawing which surpassed by leaps and bounds anything I had done previously. Those couple months have brought my drawing skill to a place I thought it’d take at least a year to get to.

Overall, interning with East Oaks Studio has been an enlightening experience as I work to become a full-time portrait artist in the next several years. Not only was I able to develop both technical and business skills, but I was able to meet a variety of artists to network with prominent members of the contemporary realist art community and listen to their guidance on careers in the art market, hear their many different techniques, and discuss competing philosophies of aesthetics for a more well-rounded view of the career. Looking forward, I will be working as a teacher nearby in Chapel Hill and I am in talks to continue working with East Oaks as both an assistant and a student. This internship was just my start working with them.
I interned with Vidyarthi Pustak Bhandar this summer, working closely with the editor Yadab Prasad Adhikari as my mentor. The “online” nature of the internship presented some obvious and some not so expected challenges. Yet, overall, it was a summer productively spent and has had some influences in my ambitions, and personal goals.

My internship was broadly divided into two sections: training and working. In the training period, I mostly proofread the works ready to be published. I also had an opportunity to be a peer reviewer for a thesis essay—an opportunity created by my mentor solely for the preparation to edit some larger works. I was invited to a review for a book proposal which was eventually turned down by the publication. I also got to brainstorm with the marketing department (Vidyarthi is also as much a distributor as a publisher) on how the challenges put forth by the pandemic could be addressed, without compromising the safety of the staff and the customers. Though this series of meetings had very little to do with the responsibilities that were given to me, it was my major opportunity to interact with many people in Vidyarthi.

Once the training period passed, I spent the rest of my summer editing two manuscripts. The first one was a collection of short stories by a Nepalese writer in Australia, and the second one was a collection of political essays by an author that does not wish to be identified. I had some fascinating conversations with these authors about the life of a writer, their roles in the nascent democracy, and the general attitude of the population towards the writers in Nepal. I learned that nobody, in Nepal, makes their living as a writer solely and pursues writing mostly as a side project. I also learned that the reader base for the new writers is extremely limited and most pursued their writing—at least those that used English as a language of choice—only for personal satisfaction and not in an expectation of any immediate influence.

However, either out of the lack of ability to appreciate the grandeur of things or out of the habit of reading the Great Books extensively, I constantly felt the lack of subtlety in the texts that I worked with this summer. As an aspiring writer, the fear of unpreparedness to write and the consciousness of the possibility of lack of subtlety in my own pieces of writing started haunting me. It also gave me an impulse to “prepare” until I find the “confidence in my voice”, as they say lately. Lastly, ‘What do I have in me to be an adequate judge of these works?’ became the formulation of the question I asked myself and shall keep with me. All in all, this internship was an extremely humbling experience for me.

I suppose, the internship opportunity would have had an impact on me to an even greater intensity, if I could have been present in person. Some challenges became immediately obvious to me, as the internship started. Being nearly ten hours behind Nepal, I either had to work unsupervised, which was quite common as the summer progressed, or butcher my sleep schedule, which I did no less of to attend the meetings and to converse with my mentor. I was glued to my screen for most of my day, not having the manuscript on paper or a way to deliver my work, if I printed it out. I found extended screen time extremely straining and nearly distracting. Somehow, I would also end up working extra hours to complete my goals for the day than I imagine it to have taken in a proper work environment. I discovered online and at-home work to be absolutely unfitting to me.
Most definitively, the irremediable loss of online work was the fact of being online—not being in person. Often, it was difficult to understand the gestures of people I was interacting with. Mostly, I felt the loss of the friendships that I could have cultivated being in person or the supervision and learning that I could have gathered from my mentor, working alongside him extensively. To their best capacity, Vidyarthi was extremely accommodating, and my mentor was particularly encouraging. We all acknowledged and could not do away with the thought that I would have had a better insight into the workings of publication, had I been present in person. Albeit the consciousness of this loss, given the circumstances imposed upon me by the pandemic, I do not wish for my summer to have been otherwise. The internship was transformative experience for me, if not enlightening.