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August 14, 2016  
Internship Report

### **Internship Report: Chancery Court, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

My internship this summer has been very impactful and I am thankful for the Public Affairs Fund, specifically the Tonya Public Affairs endowment. This fund provided for me during my internship and I thank the Public Affairs fund chairs for that.

The organization that I interned for this summer is the Chancery Court within the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Tennessee. This district includes the following counties: Franklin, Grundy, Bledsoe, and Rae counties. The Chancellor of the district is Chancellor Jeffrey Stewart and he presides over those counties as a chancery court judge. This is an elected position and one term is eight years before reelection is required. Chancellor Stewart and Mrs. Kimberly Clark were my bosses and kept me informed on where I needed to go for that week. My responsibilities consisted of observation, note-taking, questions, and giving my assistance to anyone who needed help with something. Traveling to the other counties to report to court that day was also a responsibility. My first week was spent observing the various courts in Franklin County including chancery, circuit, general sessions, juvenile, and drug court. I was able to witness three criminal trials and even assisted in a small degree on one of them. I helped gather facts and worked closely with the public defender in Grundy County, Bob Morgan. One week, I was assigned with the District Attorneys of Franklin County, Steve Blount and Courtney Lynch. I also got to spend time with the Franklin County investigators and Sheriff. This included a tour of the

jail. Generally, my biggest responsibilities were observing and asking the right questions so I could learn about the various professions I was assigned to.

During my internship, I was allowed to chat with judges about the decisions they made in court that day. This allowed me to refine my ability to ask important questions and develop better reasoning as to why they made a particular decision on a case. One of my biggest projects was working with Bob Morgan, the Grundy County Public Defender. I was able to develop my ability to interpret and understand the law and he always answered any questions I had. I helped him compile case studies and organize a case file for a criminal trial. I also got to help interview key witnesses in the case which was valuable. This was able to accelerate the pretrial work and helped him greatly in preparing the case which made a very tangible impact. Before every court session with Chancellor Stewart, he gave me case briefs to read to prepare me for court. This helped me develop some experience in reading true legal documents that are brought before the court. These types of activities also strengthened my ability use logic, process, and reason when examining case files. On a more basic level, I was also able to improve my social skills and networking skills. I met so many different people during my internship and nearly all of them helped me or gave me advice and made me feel comfortable. A courtroom can be a very intimidating place. Attorneys, judges, and court officers can be intimidating as well, but I was able to be open-minded and eager to learn and this eased the transition into the courtroom and made talking and asking questions very easy. I think my personality helped bring some light to some people as well as I always kept a positive attitude and managed to have a lot of fun during my internship.

This internship has been one of the greatest learning experiences I have ever had. As an intern, I got to see and be a part of so many different cases and scenarios. I also got to learn how the justice system truly works. I got to ask so many questions to people who have been in the practice of law for their entire life. I also got to spend some time at the jail and I learned what that process is like. I even learned how a jury is selected for a criminal trial. Some people never learn anything about how these processes work and this is how misconceptions are formed. I was also in the unique position of being able to see a case from all perspectives. That is, I got to see cases from the judge's perspective, the defendant, the victim/plaintiff, the defense attorney, the prosecutor/DA, and from the witness. This allowed me to truly think about and listen to the case with no bias and form my own opinion as I learned about the case right in the courtroom.

My career goals have been affected strongly by the internship and the experiences it gave me. Before it started, I had a desire to go into the practice of law but I was uncertain of how law truly worked in court. I had never even been in a courtroom before I became an intern and the experience was actually refreshing. I now feel that this is the profession I want to pursue. I am confident that I can put the experiences I gained from the internship to good use. I met people who might even help me as I continue the journey of becoming an attorney of some kind. For someone with a strong interest in law, this internship will provide a perfect experience and environment to learn in. Law is not for everyone though and this internship can also show someone that the profession might not be for them. I am thankful for all the people I got to work with this summer and for the experiences I had. Hopefully someone will apply for this internship and have the same experience that I did!