

Summer Internship Report 2017

Lucille Conrad, C'19

Hometown: Chapel Hill, North Carolina



Economics Research Sewanee, Tennessee

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

This summer I was research assistant for Dr. Karadas in the Economics department of Sewanee. This research project was about finding connections between campaign contributions to local elections and company performance. As a research assistant, I was responsible for gathering and sorting data sets and analyzing academic papers. This included downloading data sets for companies that contributed to campaigns as well as sorting data about company stock performance. Dr. Karadas then used this information to support his previous conclusions or find new results.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

As Dr. Karadas' research assistant, I was given the opportunity to accomplish many different things which allowed me to grow professionally and gain new skills. During my internship, I compiled, organized, and analyzed data sets to prepare preliminary statistical reports regarding company stock performance relative to lobbying and political contributions. I also researched and analyzed academic literature about campaign contributions, stock returns related to politicians and corruption, and economic performance with different administrations. These tasks helped to contribute to papers that Dr. Karadas is hoping to publish and present in the future. They also gave me plenty of skills, particularly skills in analyzing academic papers and using excel for various purposes.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

I was given the opportunity to solve many different problems within my role as a research assistant. This included difficulty accessing and downloading a data set of all the campaign contributions to local and state elections from every state. Due to the size and amount of data, I faced difficulty in downloading all of the data in the time needed. In order to solve the problem, I decided to contact the company that provided the information. They were able to grant me access to all of the data on the website, and offered to download the data for me so that I could provide Dr. Karadas the necessary data in a timely manner. My education at Sewanee helped me solve this problem. All of classes at Sewanee have encouraged me to take initiative and be creative.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

As a research assistant, I worked mainly by myself but I was given the opportunity to interact with many different people. I was constantly in communication with Dr. Karadas which helped strengthen my ability to clearly communicate with superiors. These skills were strengthened especially whenever I came across a problem/difficulties with the task I was working on. For example, I faced difficulties when trying to download all of the necessary data for campaign contributions. I then had to contact Dr. Karadas and clearly describe to him what had happened, while also taking responsibility for the problem. This helped me develop skills in communication and working efficiently.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

My internship as a research assistant gave me a window into many different potential career. Specifically, it helped me realize that I hope to be in more of an analytical role in the future and not just responsible for gathering data.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

As a research assistant, I spent a majority of my time working alone. Most of my interactions were with Dr. Karadas which taught me how to interact with supervisors. I also spent some of my time contacting data set providers. This taught me how to clearly and efficiently gather information and ask for necessary documents.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

Don't be afraid to ask questions to anyone! It's better to ask questions early on than spend valuable time on a project and have to redo it.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for giving me the chance to work as a research assistant for the Sewanee Economics department under Dr. Karadas. I learned more than I ever thought I could in just 2 months. Thank you!