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

The Virginia Quarterly Review is the literary journal affiliated with the Communications department at the University of Virginia. The magazine is published four times a year, with content in fiction, non-fiction reporting and essays, poetry, photojournalism, and discussion, covering nearly every topic possible. This summer, I was an editorial intern, working in the office, mainly helping to meet the deadline for the Summer issue and prepare for the annual week-long VQR Writer's Conference that takes place here at the University. My tasks/projects included fact checking, proofreading, line-break work, research, social media promotion, and various office tasks in order to prepare for the Writer's Conference. During the conference, we were on call nearly the whole week, working to make sure everyone had a smooth experience while here attending panels, readings, and receptions. In addition, I was able to work with the Graphic Designer in office, and watch the process of selecting photos/illustrations for the upcoming issue, and the physical organization of pieces in the journal. I was also tasked with reading and filtering through fiction and poetry submissions sent to VQR.

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?

I believe the work I did this summer was helpful in taking a lot of the stress off of the editors and the graphic designer at VQR. I learned about the rather tedious work of proofreading and line breaking, however ultimately I realized that they are essential to the production of a good piece and magazine. I learned about the editing/proofing process for the first month I was here, and then the publishing/design process as we approached the deadline for the Summer Issue. In addition, I gained experience writing legal contracts between authors and VQR, social media promotion through Twitter, Instagram, and the #VQRTrueStory non-fiction experiment at VQR.
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?

While fact checking, I often found that finding a credible source to support facts found in many of the non-fiction pieces was difficult. Authors commonly reference a place, event, or person, for example, without providing the source. I feel as though my experience at Sewanee, whether it be through academic research or citing sources efficiently, helped me a lot throughout this process. I could efficiently determine whether a source was credible, or not, and where to research in order to reach the widest database.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

VQR hosted four interns in total this summer, therefore projects almost always required working on a team with the other interns. For example, we were asked to come up with criticism-essay topics for the fall issue, starting by creating a list of books that will be released this fall. Individually, we each researched press catalogues, looking for books to be released in the fall that aligned with the fall magazine theme. However, we ultimately had to bring these individual books together and decide on which themes would work well together within a review essay. It was tough with four different opinions and ideas coming together on one project, but I feel as though I came away with a better understanding of how to compromise and work with others over a long period of time.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I am definitely interested in the world of journalism and after working with VQR, I feel as though I want to be involved in this world throughout my career. Whether it be environmental journalism, or simply working to contribute to magazines through my own writing, I feel confident that my experience at VQR has given me the skills to pursue these goals.

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?

I was able to work with people from very strong literary backgrounds this summer, which is a little foreign to me as a natural resources major. While I am passionate about literature and language, I was constantly encountering people with different educational backgrounds than my own. I kept an open mind and made sure to constantly ask questions, because I realized that I could learn a lot from my co-workers and fellow interns, coming from all different backgrounds. I learned that although pursuing an English major or an MFA can be beneficial in pursuing a career in journalism or writing, these degrees are not the end all be all. I met several writers who, no matter their educational or economic background, we able to fit into this world of literature and writing because of their love for writing and ability to work hard.

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

It is pretty difficult to make it around Charlottesville without a car, although not entirely impossible. I highly recommend having one though, because Boar's Head (the office) does not sit along the university transit routes.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with VQR this summer. Every single person in the office has something unique to bring to the table, and I loved having the opportunity to be able to watch the summer issue grow and take shape all the way up until deadline. I was so impressed that
such a small team could produce such a prestigious and interesting magazine, and I am so lucky to have been a part of that team this summer!