

## Summer Internship Report 2017

**Kiley Ezzell, C'18**

Hometown: New Orleans, Louisiana



### **Tennessee Disability Pathfinder Nashville, TN**

*(Kiley is in the back row, second from the right)*

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

The Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free information and assistance call center for persons with disabilities, their family members, and service providers. It is a joint project of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. Pathfinder helps individuals with disabilities and or their family members connect with community agencies to find the services they need. Pathfinder also offers education and training on community resources, disability awareness and sensitivity. As an intern my responsibilities comprised of performing follow up surveys, updating the calendar, updating agencies, and my favorite, attending various conferences and panels regarding disability awareness and education. Follow-up Surveys entailed me calling previous clients of Pathfinder and asking about their experience with Pathfinder. Updating the calendar entailed me researching each event to find the contact person as well as more specific details of the event and posting them on the calendar promptly. Pathfinder has over 3000 resources in their database and I would update these agencies by calling the agency and updating various service and contact information. Finally, attending various conferences allowed me to gain more insight on this career.

**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 think my customer services skills have grown tremendously as a result of this internship. Performing follow up surveys was something only an intern could do as to get an unbiased representative. I would talk to a variety of people from different backgrounds. My professional communication skills have grown tremendously since performing these follow surveys. I feel my biggest accomplishment was getting to write an article for the monthly newsletter. I was able to interview a student who graduated from The Next Steps program at Vanderbilt which is a 2 year

university to help intellectually disabled adults transition into the professional world. Interviewing this student and writing the article for the newsletter was my biggest accomplishment through this internship.

**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?**

When updating the agencies for the database of Pathfinder I would have to call various agencies and update their contact and service information. However, because of the extensive amounts of agencies it was very time consuming. However, I was able to group the agencies into various categories to make this process shorter. I believe Sewanee helped me problem solve efficiently in this manner.

**In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?**

I think my teamwork skills have increased tremendously. My office was very diverse and I think because of that my teamwork skills increased tremendously. Because my office was diverse, there was occasionally a language barrier as well as a cultural barrier. Because of these barriers I believe I gained the skills to work with different personalities. I feel that my listening skills have improved tremendously as well as my patience.

**How did your internship affect your career plans?**

Before pursuing this internship I had little to no idea of what I wanted to do. However, after I feel that I have a much better idea of what direction I want my career path to go in. I found this internship to be very rewarding and very fitting for my personality as well as skills. I will definitely keep in contact with Pathfinder as well as look to them as a reference for my future career plans.

**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?**

Through the process of follow up calls, I encountered many different people from various backgrounds and home life. Most clients that used Pathfinder are of lower income and are looking to Pathfinder for resources and financial assistance. During each phone call I would have to keep this in mind as well as their needs and situation. I feel my communication skills have grown tremendously. I found that patience with people can go a long way and is something that is universally appreciated. I found that one must always keep an open and cheerful mind when communicating with anyone.

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

If I had to give any advice it would be to keep up with your journal. The journal is a great thing to have not only for the summer evaluation, but for future purposes as well. I thoroughly enjoyed writing in my journal. It's a way to remember small aspects of a summer internship that you otherwise may forget.

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**Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:**

I would like to thank the internship donors for everything. Without the funding I would not have the opportunity I had this summer. This summer was a very eye-opening experience and feel that it has sent me in the right direction for my future. Because of the funding donors I was able to live in a new city and experience a glimpse of my potential future and it was very exciting.