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e51 Internship
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This summer, I was awakened and inspired during my internship for e51 in Raleigh, North Carolina. E51 is an organization based out of HQ Raleigh, an awesome open-air, collaborative co-working space for start-ups. E51 is dedicated to building a robust ecosystem of female entrepreneurs in the Triangle Area, with what they describe as a BHAG (Big, Hairy Audacious Goal) of making Raleigh THE place to be a female entrepreneur in the U.S. Now, this is kind of ambiguous, which was one of the challenges of my internship. How do you go about helping female entrepreneurs? How do you reach out to them? After realizing my strengths in research and collaboration, I created and spearheaded a project where I interviewed 30 female entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds (racial, age, industry, etc), and heard their stories. Through this, I was able to really tap into the strong network of women. I also got to experience my first co-working space. It was awesome to meet like-minded people who were starting their own companies and to see the resources that were available for entrepreneurs! I felt inspired to be a doer. Additionally, I managed the social media and wrote blog posts for e51, where I got to explore different subjects and share my resources and research with e51's network of over 700 women.

After interviewing 30 women about their experiences as female entrepreneurs, I feel like I have a new perspective on what it's like to be an entrepreneur, a female, and a female entrepreneur. How could I possibly express my gratitude to the women I've gotten to meet during my internship this summer? I was so amazed by the wisdom, strength, and determination that these women had. I have no doubt that they will change the world in

their own ways. I certainly learned how to take initiative, open up, and talk to people. I feel empowered to be a self-starter, and I am no longer scared to go up to anyone and talk to them. Through empowering them, they empowered me. I also feel like I have a unique perspective on female entrepreneurs as a whole, particularly those in Raleigh, and my research could be very useful to e51's sister organizations.

Having this new understanding of the Raleigh female entrepreneurial scene, I felt it would be selfish not to share it with my community, so I wrote up a blog post and posted each story one-by-one (alongside an awesome picture). I got the chance to speak to women all the way from high schoolers to seasoned angel investors. There were artists, accidental entrepreneurs, start-up queens, and lawyers, and everything in between. There were international travelers, feminist manifestos, and tech nerds. I wanted to highlight individual stories while also understanding the power female entrepreneurs have and the struggles they collectively face. Some women were housed out of HQ Raleigh, so it was awesome to make friends with them and get to put a story to the faces I saw every day. Some of the struggles women entrepreneurs face are gaining confidence, being assertive, and getting that funding (their networks often aren't as strong).

I served to connect these women to each other and create a stronger network of female entrepreneurs. The point was to create an ultimate 'database' of female entrepreneurs that would allow the greater Raleigh area to contact, utilize, and know where female entrepreneurs were in the area, thus allowing an easy flow of resources (funding). Through greater access to and knowledge of female entrepreneurs, the community is able to support and uplift them, particularly through my 'call-to-action' at the end of each post.

E51 (and myself) also accomplish this through hosting events, such as a panel featuring Robbie Hardy, an author giving advice to women in the workplace. I helped host this event, and used it to reach out to the female entrepreneur attendees. I also got to interview Robbie after she got back from the United State of Women conference and share my story over social media.

One highlight of my internship was getting to teach a class at HQ Raleigh about what I know about women in the workplace. The students were very receptive, and it was exciting that I was able to share my knowledge (both from college and this experience) with people. Through this experience, I feel like I understood that my intended career path in Economics does not have to be mutually exclusive with my passion for female empowerment. I can enact real change for women in business utilizing my skills.

I am so thankful for the skills and connections I gained through this internship. What a great start to my post-grad career path!