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

The organization I worked for this summer is a Main Street sponsored program called the Winchester Downtown Program Corporation (WDPC). The sole purpose of this organization is the recruitment and retention of small businesses within the downtown Winchester area, while simultaneously trying to create a vibrant and sustainable downtown area that is also a highly desirable destination. I worked directly with the Executive Director of this program, Abby Pickett, during my time with the WDPC. I worked on a multitude of tasks during this internship. Many of these tasks centered around events that the WDPC puts on to promote the downtown area and its local businesses. I worked on the development and design of two Winchester Wriggle events, one that took place in June and one that is coming up in September. This event is an art and music crawl where the WDPC links local artists and musicians to the local businesses located on the Winchester square. Participants of the event move around the various shops where they can purchase from the businesses and the local artists. This event incorporates a variety of cultural and artistic styles that are all done by local residents of the area. Another event is the Rising Sun Redbud Music Festival, where local bands will play in the downtown’s amphitheatre while local vendors set up to sell their handmade work. There is also the Taste of Autumn festival where we work to get local businesses along with local government officials and nonprofit organizations to participate in a chilli cook off, along with a classic car show and vendors. The last event I worked on was the Farm to Table Dinner where local residents come together on the Square for a nice night of mingling and shopping with a delicious organic, all natural dinner with ingredients provided from local residents. Finally, I worked on a video series called “Why Winchester” which showcases current residents and visitors and why they believe that Winchester is unique and a great place to live, work, or visit.
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 accomplished a great deal throughout this internship. I made multiple databases and surveys which allowed Mrs. Pickett an easier way to obtain information from business owners and members of the various organizations that she works with. We successfully made it through one event while making lead way on the next 4 upcoming events for downtown Winchester. I made huge progress on the video series we created called “Why Winchester” because I made the introduction, conducted interviews and edited the videos in advance. These will be posted on Wednesdays for the next coming months. I came up with multiple t-shirt design ideas for varying events and also helped to make new signs and banners for these events. Another project I worked on was updating the signs that are located throughout downtown winchester that show entertainment, shopping, professional, eateries, and more that are located in the area. I grew tremendously in professional and technical skills throughout the projects I worked on. I learned to communicate more effectively and efficiently with a multitude of people, from local shop owners and residents to people holding local government positions. I also gained self confidence in that I headed up multiple projects on my own and saw success within them. I gained various new technical skills, teaching myself to use new, varying applications to achieve success in the projects I was assigned. I learned how to create shirt, banner, and bulletin designs along with making, editing, and creating movies for the WDPC video series. I also grew in my ability to event plan and time manage to get all the steps done for these events.

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?

One problem that I focused on over the summer was the lack of technological organization. The program was lacking in sufficient online organization. I introduced the Executive Director to the comfort and ease of Google Drive. I showed her how she can place documents and images into the drive to show at presentations or when she is out of the office away from her laptop. I assisted in her in making several Google sheets for various things which included a complete database of the buildings within the downtown that listed their value, square footage, availability, and more. The other one was a database for the Wriggle events that was composed of information on local artists and musicians. I created member satisfaction surveys for the members of the Rotary club which my supervisor was also the president off and created surveys for the business owners to fill out. All of these were done through Google. One project I started for Mrs. Pickett was a video series where I taught her how to use different applications for editing and composing the series. For events, I used being an “outsider” of the event to my advantage and proposed ways to make events run smoothly and gave new ideas that could be added to the event. During my time at Sewanee, I have been self taught in how to use Google and other applications to complete projects for my classes which aided me tremendously in being able to help Mrs. Pickett organize and create databases and surveys for her.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

Teamwork is a large part of the WDPC and was a vital part of my internship. Mrs. Pickett coordinates with about 12 committees and boards. These can be Main Street programs, the event committees, the WDPC boards, or the local merchant committees. All of these are necessary in keeping the downtown running like a well-oiled machine while giving the area an opportunity to thrive. I learned many teamwork and team building skills during my time here seeing most of these committees in action and how they take votes or propose new ideas or make difficult decisions as a unit. The biggest example of learning new teamwork skills and seeing teamwork in the highest position was when the WDPC board was making final decisions for the new event building that they are working on which will hold dinners, conferences, workshops, and more. Everyone was given the opportunity to speak their mind
and their opinions were respected. The committee president would call for a vote on an idea or call for further discussion on the matter. In one hour, the committee had worked alongside each other to make the last and final agreements on the space. This showed me the importance in working together as a unit.

**How did your internship affect your career plans?**
My overall goal is to become a lawyer once I leave Sewanee. However, this internship along with my previous internship of working with the county mayor has continued and grown my interests of one day becoming involved with local government. This internship has shown me the importance of working towards bettering your community, and being able to see Winchester grow and become more vibrant and sustainable has been an incredible feeling. Mrs. Pickett also took into consideration my interest with local government and future dreams of being an attorney. Therefore, she sent me on some days to work with the mayor, city councilmen, city manager, and also allowed me to go to court on several occasions and work with a few Sewanee alumni that are lawyers. One day I assisted with a groundbreaking for a new technology school and was able to meet the Governor and Senator Bowling which was extremely interesting since I am a politics major. This internship let me learn even more about local government and how it is something I hope to work with in the future.

**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?**
Working with so many different committees during my internship allowed me to meet people who had different backgrounds than I did. Some were business owners who gave me perspective on what it is like to run a business in a small town. Others were local residents who are retired and volunteer because they wish to see their community flourish. Several members of local government shared their journeys and how they have gotten to where they are today. People of all ages are members of the committees so I had to learn how best to communicate with them. These people offered me unique experiences and allowed me to learn about them and what interested them in wanting to be apart of the WDPC.

**Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:**
Thank you so much for providing me with an incredible summer. The funding I was provided allowed me to have an incredible experience where I worked with an Executive Director of a corporation that is making so much change within the area of Winchester. It allowed me to contribute to a community that is close to home and allowed me to see how local government and county government along with the state work together to allow a program like this to flourish. This internship grew my desire to one day help with local government. Again, thank you for sponsoring me and allowing me an incredible, life changing experience.