In seeking a way to combine my concerns for the environment and for social justice, I spent the summer of 2016 as a Campaign Organizing Intern with the Boston-based nonprofit Corporate Accountability International (CAI). Over the course of the summer, I had the opportunity to work on projects ranging from organizing old campaign materials to lobbying at the Massachusetts State House to laying the groundwork for campaigns to be conducted in the fall. I got to speak with fellow environmental activists in Florida, Massachusetts and Maine, learned the ins and outs of a successful advocacy organization, and made lasting connections with my fellow interns and the committed staff at CAI. This internship has helped me better understand my own career goals and how to achieve those goals in the future, as well as being an inspiring experience. I hope to bring this positive energy with me to Sewanee and beyond.

With headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts and staff and allies in Los Angeles, Seattle, Nigeria, and India, CAI has been fighting for social and environmental justice since its inception in the 1970’s. Originally the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT), the organization formed to end aggressive marketing of infant formula to impoverished mothers in the global south. Nestlé, the global food and beverage corporation, was marketing its infant formula in such a way that led mothers to believe the infant formula was better than breast milk, even in areas with poor water quality. This marketing led to increased infant mortality. After a successful boycott of Nestlé that forced the company to change its marketing practices, INFACT organized a boycott of GE to end the company’s nuclear weapons manufacture division. After INFACT helped to make the documentary *Deadly Deception*, which won an Academy Award in 1991, the boycott gained traction and in 1993, GE ended its nuclear weapons
Zack Loehle  
August 11th, 2016

manufacture. INFACT then became Corporate Accountability International (CAI), as the old name did not reflect the current focus of the organization.

After those two initial campaigns, CAI has run ongoing campaigns on several fronts. The Challenge Big Tobacco campaign has worked to end the tobacco industry’s marketing to children by using characters such as Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man, and was an integral part of the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Still a part of the implementation of the FCTC, CAI also works to for food and climate justice, as well as to stop water privatization at home and abroad, pushing the world bank to stop funding water privatization projects and bringing attention to the environmental and social problems with water privatization on the municipal and commercial level. The work to stop water privatization on the national level is called the Think Outside the Bottle Campaign. I worked in this last campaign as a member of the National Water team.

As a member of the water team, I worked on several different projects. Individually, I was responsible for the reorganization of old and disorganized campaign materials dating from the beginning of the Think Outside the Bottle Campaign in 2004 to more recent activities. I was also responsible for contacting potential environmental organizations to partner with in Florida and Maine in order to help National Parks move away from the sale of bottled water, an unsustainable practice that can avoided by using reusable bottles and tap water. This part of my internship required me researching environmental and social justice organizations in each of those states, finding their contact information, and calling and discussing our campaign. Through these calls, I got to speak with members of Defenders of Wildlife, The Sierra Club, Audubon, Nature Conservancy, as well as many smaller local groups. Having followed the work and activities of Defenders of Wildlife since I was a kid, meeting with their staff felt like my environmentalist “fanboy” moment.

In total, there were six interns working on water issues, and we all worked together on a variety of projects. We called every National Park unit in the United States to complete a survey on which parks
sold or did not sell bottled water. While the National Park Service has officially recommended a “bottled water free” policy as part of its overall sustainability initiative, parks do not have to report changes in concessions contracts to the National Park Service. This discrepancy meant that the only way to really find out which parks are or are not bottled-water-free was to call all the parks in the country to complete the survey. I was responsible for surveying the Southeast region.

We also worked to stop a water privatization bill in the Massachusetts state house. The most exciting part of my summer, we lobbied every single state senator and representative in the state capitol building, turning a quiet, unknown bill that would have easily slid through the legislature into a hot-button topic that the entire state house was discussing. The bill would have made the privatization of municipal water systems in Massachusetts much easier, allowing unsolicited bids for city contracts by water companies and also opening already cash-strapped public funds for use by private companies. Over the course of two weeks, I walked into the offices of innumerable legislators, speaking about the issue with their staffers and in some cases even the legislators themselves. Because of our work and the work of fellow labor, social justice and environmental organizations, the bill failed to pass.

Through my internship with CAI, I learned how to speak with authority and conviction about issues which I care deeply, communicating that passion to bring about positive change. I had never worked full-time for an advocacy organization and doing so taught me an incredible amount about how American government works and how organizations and people fight for political change. It also gave me the opportunity to work with passionate, dedicated people, in CAI and other organizations, who work for positive change every day. I intend to look further into careers in organizing, and have already been researching postgraduate opportunities with organizations such as the Green Corps, a field school for environmental organizing. Working for CAI was one of the better choices I have made in my college career.