

**Summer Internship Report 2017**

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**Memphis Urban Health Institute  
Memphis, Tennessee**

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

As part of the new Memphis Urban Health Institute, I interned at Methodist University Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. This hospital serves a diverse population of Memphis residents. For the six weeks I was interning there, I worked on a patient floor as a Compassionate Companion where I tended to the patients and their families in any nonclinical way needed, such as getting blankets, pillows, ice, or water, in order to make their stay more enjoyable and take a load off of the RN and RNAs. I also spent time in Patient Advocacy where I sat in on meetings, did filing, copying, and learned about the Grievance and Complaint process. Finally, I spent the majority of my time in the laboratory where I sorted carriers filled with specimens as they came in, gave them to the lab processors, and ran them to the appropriate departments.

**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 learned how to work in a professional environment both with people I truly enjoyed and with people I did not care for at all. I learned to interact with everyone in a professional manner in order to ensure that the job was getting done in the best way possible but to also not compromise my beliefs. I now know how to better interact with people of all backgrounds and beliefs, not just those that similarly align with mine. Additionally, I learned a lot about how hospitals work and that every person - lab personnel, custodians, nurses, and doctors - are essential to ensuring that the hospital runs smoothly.

**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?**

In my first week in the lab, I made a mistake with some of the blood samples and put them in the wrong place. I upset one of my coworkers, and I apologized profusely. I thought he disliked me after

that, but I still tried my best to be friendly and start conversations with him when possible. Sewanee has taught me how to live with my mistakes, learn from them, and to move on from them and address them when necessary. Now, that coworker and I are friends on Facebook and we talked many times during the rest of my internship.

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

Working in the lab taught me the importance of teamwork. The process starts with the nurses who draw the specimen, send it to the lab and make the order online, and from there we process the specimens and send it to the appropriate department so it can be tested and the results can be sent back. It showed me that communication is key in order to make this long process work efficiently, therefore every time I received carriers I needed to make sure I was on top of it and transferring the specimens to the processors ASAP. Additionally, when I ran the specimens to the appropriate department, I had to announce it to ensure that everyone knew there was another specimen to process so that it could be done as quickly as possible. If I did not communicate at every step along the way, the process would be much slower and specimens could be misplaced.

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

This internship further confirmed my plans to pursue medical school. I've known for quite some time that I want to be a physician, but being in the hospital environment long term further solidified my plans. I truly enjoyed every department I worked in and the care that everyone puts in for other people that they may or may not interact with.

**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?**

Memphis is a diverse city with a deep history that is important to understanding the issues it now faces. Although I enjoy diversity and grew up in a diverse neighborhood and school, it was a nice change from Sewanee in terms of A) being in a large city and B) being surrounded by other people of color. Everyone I met in the hospital was nice, whether a patient or staff, and I did not have issues with anyone. I had issues with some of the people in my program whom I felt were not considerate of the city we were in and the history it had with slavery and racism. In order to stay cordial and have meaningful conversations, I would pick my battles and try to challenge their beliefs or ask them to consider some of the things that they were thinking. Such as why inner-city Memphis is poor (white flight and school zoning) not because Black people are inherently lazy or unable to get jobs. I realized that they grew up in predominately white areas and were not taught things as I have been, nor have they actively sought it out, so I took the opportunity to help them think outside of the box, and for myself to learn about how these narratives still exist and how to appropriately have meaningful conversations with others.

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

Bring your own car! There's much to do but you need transportation to get there. Explore the city and do all the free/inexpensive things you can find! (Choose901 is the best way to find out what is happening). Make friends with Rhodes students staying on campus for the summer- they aren't all that bad. ;)

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

Thank you so very much for this opportunity- Memphis is a beautiful city that I have never seen before, although I am from Chattanooga, TN. I learned a lot, not just about working in a hospital but

social skills that I can use for the rest of my life. Staying on Rhodes campus was amazing as well and I met some great students from our rival school. This summer was life-changing and I'm grateful for the time I got to spend there!