

Working for Johnson Development this summer I interned in the Self-Storage Division. As boring as Self Storage sounds, Johnson's approach to the industry and the business as a whole was very interesting and I learned a ton this summer, not to mention the oldest people in my office were around 35 years old. Johnson is attempting to build one of the largest portfolios of Self-Storage in the country, however the day-to-day operations of the storage facilities are typically managed by a publically traded REIT. Because of this, the tempo in the office is very fast paced and they are trying to get as many deals done as possible.

In the beginning of the summer each of the interns was tasked with a specific market that JDA wanted to get involved in. I was assigned Miami, meaning that my time this summer was spent learning everything I could about Miami and the market as a whole. Demographics, local developments, infrastructure projects, all of these are important when you are trying to tell the story of a specific area. Being able to learn what to look for from people who had a lot of experience was an opportunity I benefitted greatly from.

As the summer progressed they gave us more autonomy in the sense that we were actively looking for sites within our respective markets. The internship culminated in a LOI (Letter of Intent) pitch with the president of the division and the CEO of the company. Coming from Sewanee, I really knew nothing about real estate. This summer taught me way more than a simple real estate class ever could have and I honestly have walked away from this experience with a much sounder foundation in terms of my future ability to make investments in real estate and markets affiliated with real estate.

I was offered a full time position at the end of my internship and I happily accepted it. I have moved into my role as a real estate analyst, primarily backing up the real estate managers when they find areas or specific sites that they think would work well with our financial model. Hopefully at some point in the near future I will be able to transition into a role where I am actually the one doing the deals, and I think that is something that is extremely rare at my age. JDA is willing to invest in its employees regardless of age as long as you show that you are capable of handling yourself and acting professionally. The location can definitely throw you off, I would have never seen myself living in Spartanburg, SC right out of college, but I would highly recommend this internship to anyone interested in commercial real estate or development.