

Carleton

Internships

While proud of being ranked No. 1 in undergraduate teaching, Carleton knows that books and lectures aren't the only things students need to prepare for life after college. Real-world experience is also crucial—more so today than ever, says Career Center Director Kim Betz.

“In the past, employers were more willing to do on-the-job training,” Betz explains. “Today they expect recent graduates to have some internship experience. It's becoming much more competitive for entry-level positions.”

In response to this changing job market, all Carleton students are now encouraged to complete at least one internship before they graduate. Internships are an essential part of the Carleton education, a way to gain valuable experience, explore career aspirations, and connect academics with the real world.

All of these benefits materialized for Nathan Rockey '16 during his internship with Long Way Home, a nonprofit organization in Guatemala. Although he spent his summer internship swinging hammers and helping with fundraising, the chemistry major says the experience absolutely plays into his career aspirations to work in healthcare.

“It brought me out of this bubble I've had the fortune of living in,” he says. “It was another step in my journey of becoming more globally aware. I didn't practice medicine, but I did work on relevant skills like working hard to understand a culture that's different from my own.”

Rockey's experience in Guatemala is just one of hundreds of domestic and international internships that the Career Center helps students find through many resources, including its online tool, The Tunnel. The Career Center also helps students identify sources of funding for internships, which are often unpaid. In fact, they can even end up costing students money through airfare, housing, and living expenses. Plus, taking an internship often means forgoing a paid summer job.

“If we are really encouraging students to participate in internships, we have a responsibility to make sure that every student has equal opportunity to them,” Betz says. “We need to be sure students who don't have access to resources or funding aren't at a disadvantage.”

“The funding I received made my internship possible, and I'm so grateful for Stephen R. West '53 and his wife Phyllis M. West for starting the Initiative for Service Internships in International Development,” Rockey says. “It's no exaggeration that my internship helped me become a better person who is better equipped to engage in global phenomena.”



Internship Profile:

Nathan Rockey '16, intern with Long Way Home in San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala

Building walls, managing data, pounding sledgehammers, interviewing teachers, improving his Spanish, making new friends—it's impossible for Nathan Rockey '16 to choose just one highlight from his summer internship in Guatemala.

Rockey was “eager to do something productive” the summer after his sophomore year and decided an internship abroad would be the perfect opportunity to travel and prepare for the real world. He accomplished both through an internship with Long Way Home, a nonprofit which builds schools, provides employment, and promotes environmental stewardship.

A highlight of Rockey's summer was living with a Guatemalan host family. They spoke no English, but life with them quickly became a familiar routine. After his host mother cooked a plate of panqueques for breakfast, Rockey began his short walk to work at the school site. There, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., his duties could be wildly different.

“I spent part of my time working with the construction team that is building the school; I hauled tires, pounded dirt into tires, and much more,” Rockey says. “I spent another chunk of time working as an intern for the director of development. I helped her run the summer fundraising campaign by interviewing the teaching staff and writing letters to our supporters. I also managed the water filtration system at the site and occasionally assisted in English classes in the primary school.”

Rockey also kept an eye out for other places he could help, and he ended up spending a week helping the fifth grade class build a bear out of tires. The blend of manual labor and nonprofit office work was the perfect combination, he says.

“There is something about spending a day working up a sweat and creating something physical. It's a different feeling of pride than finishing an essay.”

Rockey found that the hard work and happy attitudes of everyone at Long Way Home inspired him. Not only did he learn about the behind-the-scenes work of a nonprofit, he also discovered the importance of adaptability. While the work didn't directly pertain to his career goals—he's a chemistry major planning a future in medicine—it did fuel his interest in addressing healthcare inequity in developing countries.

“It was an adventure that I learned a lot from,” Rockey says. “The work, the internship, living in the town and with my host family, going on trips ... I grew in a lot of ways.”

