Mike's Message
Success Story Edition

Timmy Nguyen

Major: Business Administration & Management
Status: Freshman
Position: Internship
Employer: City of Richmond
Title: DIT End User Support

How did you find your internship?
I found my internship through my career advisor, Darlene Ward. I met Darlene through my older sister Regina who had Darlene as an advisor when she was a student at VCU. Darlene was very helpful from day one to now. She gave me all the necessary advice that I needed in order to succeed at the corporate level. If it was not for her help, I would not be working where I am today.

Many students cannot find an internship or full time position. Since you have successfully found a wonderful opportunity and beat stiff competition, what advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process?
Keep your head up and do not give up on your search. There are many opportunities out there that you just have to be patient with. It is an open market with many positions that are in desperate need. Take advantage of every resource that you are given in order to succeed in your search. Do not hesitate to ask for help.

What should they do?
First, talk to your career advisor and see what they can do to help you. They know what is available out there and their connection through the university might be able to get you in with their recommendations. Second, go to career fairs and introduce yourself to other companies that are on campus looking for employees. Those events are really helpful as it gives you the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the companies and learn many things about them to help with your job search. Third, take advantage of RAMS Recruiting. That database is filled with many job opportunities that have yet to be attained by employees. It is always being updated with new opportunities.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
By participating in this internship, I think the first thing I will gain is experience. It will allow me as a student to use my knowledge that I have attained from VCU, but also to learn new things at work that will allow me to get a better understanding of an everyday work process.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
Coming in as a freshmen and working everyday is something that presents many challenges. The biggest thing is time management. Managing your time at school and completing your school work, while going to work is another thing. I think going through this process will allow us as students to learn a lot about ourselves and determine how motivated we are.

What are some of your goals that you plan to accomplish while completing the internship?
My goal is to sit back and learn from the people above me who have gone through the same thing that I am going through right now. It is a process of learning each day of what goes on within the corporate world. I will come in and do whatever is asked of me in order to get the work done. In the end, I hope I will be able to learn valuable things that will set the bar for me when I graduate from college. Every inch of information will be important during this learning experience.

Is there anything else you would like to share, with current students and recent alumni, regarding your internship?
If you have an opportunity to intern/co-op while you are in school, then you should absolutely take full advantage of it. It may seem a lot of work now, but in the end it will help you when you graduate. You will have an easier time to finding a job because of the experience you have obtained during your college years.
Erica Freeman

How did you find your internship? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found my internship through the National Society of Black Engineers National Conference that was held during March 2008 in Orlando, Florida. I had an interview that was set up before going to the conference, as many companies view the NSBE members resume's online prior to in order to set up interviews. The only advice that I would give anyone finding an internship, job or co-op experience is to stay persistent. Persistence is key to landing a great opportunity, and being prepared for the interview by doing mock interviews and knowing what questions to ask the interviewer is also key to landing the job. Of course I would recommend going to the VCU Career Centers and meet with your career consultant, as they are excellent help in critiquing resumes, doing mock interviews and giving you guidance and reassurance during the job search process.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
I will gain an understanding of the consumer health industry, and I have discovered that I really have a passion for personalized health whether it is medicinal or consumables. I hope to gain the experience of being in a research environment and hopefully get some exposure to the business side of being a brand manager—my dream position at Johnson and Johnson.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
The biggest challenge I face on any internship is being one of the only female and African American interns working in a predominantly Caucasian male environment. This is something that each individual has to deal with on a personal basis, and for me I like to challenge myself day to day in order to change the mentality that still exists for minorities, especially women, in the workplace.

What are some of your goals that you plan to accomplish while completing the internship?
The biggest accomplishment for me is to get a job offer and possible recommendation to come back next year to intern with J&J. My goal is to continue to work hard in showing my supervisor and constituents that I am technically capable in this role and ready for employment in the J&J environment. Another goal is to have my project completed at least 2 weeks before I leave the internship showing that I can multi-task.

Is there anything else you would like to share, with current students and recent alumni, regarding your internship?
I love Johnson and Johnson and would recommend any Chemical Engineer, Finance, Economics, Information Systems majors to apply for internships, co-ops or full time positions. They have a great work life balance and a great moral and ethical standing on what the company values. These are things that everyone should look for in a company they would like to work for. I love that J&J is mostly located in New Jersey because it is within hours away from some of the greatest cities in America. All in all, networking is key in any job and it’s all about who you

John Shannon

How did you find your internship? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found my Internship through the VCU Career Centers. Most students I talk to that have not found an internship complain that there are not any “good” internships available. When I ask where they have applied, most say nowhere. I would advise students to apply to anything that sounds interesting. Just because you apply, it does not mean you have to take the job. The same goes with an interview. The company is using the interview to get to know you, use it to get to know them as well.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
I gained a guaranteed job with Northrop Grumman, experience and a good network of engineers.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
The most challenging thing is proving yourself; you have to prove that you can handle regular engineering work before you will be allowed to work on non mundane tasks. It does not hurt to ask for more challenging work.
Calvin Cropper

Major: Computer Engineering
Status: Senior
Position: Internship
Employer: Anheuser-Busch
Title: Intern

How did you find your internship? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found my position from constant communication with a recruiter I met at a NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers) career conference. Once you know where you want to work, keeping in contact with their recruiting representative is key in letting them know you are serious about their company and the position.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
I expect to gain an educational benefit from working full-time under the belts of knowledgeable and qualified engineers. Also, internships provide the opportunity to gain networking contacts and the benefit of knowing what employers look for and want.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
Gathering the necessary resources and personnel to complete a given project and adapting to the company environment and expectations.

What are some of your goals that you plan to accomplish while completing the internship?
Successfully complete all projects at or above the expectations and deliver a drive for success that will let the managers know I can make a difference.

Is there anything else you would like to share, with current students and recent alumni, regarding your internship?
Be actively involved in everything you do and have a constant drive for success. This helps you to stand out to any employer whether it is at school or on the job.

Tiffany Batkin

Major: Marketing
Status: Alumni/Graduated 2007
Position: Full Time
Employer: Alcon Labs
Title: Medical Sales Representative

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found out about Alcon through a VCU career fair in October, 2007. I briefly talked with two senior medical sales reps that were in charge of the Alcon table and dropped off my resume. I was then contacted about 2 weeks later by the district manager for the northeast region, Dan Trias. I talked to him for a while and then personally met with him during a VCU "Meet and Connect" in November. After that, I did not hear from him until after I graduated. It was around mid-January when he sent me an email asking if I was still interested in a position with Alcon, and of course I said yes! I then went through a long process of online and phone interviews and applications and finally had a final interview with Dan in mid-February. I was offered the job the following Monday.

My advice to new graduates or students looking for internships is don't give up! Going through the process of looking for something that I would be interested in doing took long hours, and I experienced many frustrations because a lot of the positions I was interested in required a certain amount of experience.

Being fresh out of college I didn't exactly have an ideal resume, especially for the position I am in now which was listed requiring 2-5 years prior experience in pharmacy or related sales. I took a chance, and someone took a chance on me. I really wanted this position, and it showed in my interview as well as the process in getting to that point. I made sure all of the online interviews and applications were done on time, if not early, and also followed up.

How has your education prepared you for this position?
Having a marketing degree has helped me in many ways. In my college classes, we learned how to deal with certain types of people and what people want in products and/or services. By knowing what people want, you find ways to tailor how you market your product/service to them. That is the most important aspect in my career, knowing the ins and outs of our products and tailoring them to physicians’ needs.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your position?
Some challenges I may face, and am already facing, are time management and getting my schedule down. This position is a VERY self-motivated one, and in order for me to be successful, I must see a certain number of doctors a day to relay our product information to them. That is the most important aspect in my career, knowing the ins and outs of our products and tailoring them to physicians’ needs.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your position?
Some challenges I may face, and am already facing, are time management and getting my schedule down. This position is a VERY self-motivated one, and in order for me to be successful, I must see a certain number of doctors a day to relay our product information to them. When you have 150 a month, one can imagine the time constraint. But it is getting easier. Going into this career, I knew I was going to face a lot of challenges, especially being straight out of college and 80% of my colleagues have been in this field for many years. But I wouldn't change a thing! I enjoy the learning experiences that I see everyday because they make me grow as a professional.
How did you find your internship? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?

I found the internship opportunity through an email sent from Roxanne Spindle, to all the BAP students. I found the best route for internships/positions were provided through VCU’s Career Centers, and announcements from BAP. My advice is to join BAP and visit the VCU Career Centers.

What did you gain by participating in this internship?
I gained a lot of hands on accounting knowledge and practices, which also led to full-time employment.

What are some of the goals that you planned to accomplish while completing the internship? Did you reach them?
I planned to excel in my internship by exceeding the expectations, increasing my knowledge by gaining experience, and securing employment. I believe I have accomplished my internship goals, and now set new goals for my full-time position with the same company.

How did you find your full time position?
I found this position through personal networking. Before I came to VCU for the MBA program in 2005, I was working and living in Hong Kong. The Director of Admissions at my high school in Richmond put me in contact with two students who moved with their parents and we had lunch there in Hong Kong one day.

Back in Richmond, I went to lunch one day in August with the father, Steve, who had been promoted to President, to learn more about his company. I realized that it was dealt with international freight consolidation and supply chain IT solutions. I told him I was very interested in looking for a position that was related to supply chain management, and it sounded like a good match. After the lunch, Steve suggested that I follow up with him in November.

In November, he invited me to come to his office to see the company’s business and operations, discuss job opportunities with the company, and meet with the company’s CEO and two VPs. They took me out to a business-formal lunch afterward. I was offered the job the morning right before VCU School of Business recognition ceremony in December. I accepted the job offer a couple days later, and have been working with the company since January, 2008.

What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process?

My advice:
• Plan ahead and set a career goal. Don’t wait until the last few months before graduation to start looking for job.
• Do your homework. Go to prospective employer websites and understand more about the company before career fairs and interviews.
• Network. Go to VCU Career Fairs and “Meet & Connects” and talk to the prospective employers. It is always helpful to have a personal contact with the employer representatives.
• Dress professionally and neatly to any career event and interview. The first impression makes a huge difference.
• Be sure your cover letters and resume are presentable and relevant to the employer or the position you are applying, because one won’t fit all. Ask a Career Center staff member to check content, format and grammar and to give feedback.
• For English as a Second Language Speakers: Practice, practice, practice. Study interview questions in advance and know how to answer them properly. Use a video camera or a webcam to record yourself. Go back and look at yourself from a prospective employer’s perspective. Ask a native-English speaker to point out your mispronunciations. Also, never speak too fast during an interview so employers will understand you—especially if you are speaking in a foreign accent.
• Get enough sleep the night before the interview. Live healthily and take good care of yourself. Be confident, and always think positively. Always show your interest to prospective employers, and show your passion to positions you are applying.

Is there any additional advice you would like to share with the students/alumni?
For international students it is extremely difficult to get a H-1B job in the U.S. Consider the many opportunities outside the U.S. or even your home country. Always think positively, but don’t give yourself false hope. Keep a list of employers who sponsor the H-1B and another list for employers who don’t, so you don’t waste your time. Always network.
How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?

My advice to all upcoming graduates is to do the following:
- Get on RAMS recruiting and check the openings regularly.
- Set up a career profile on multiple company websites.
- Apply to any and all jobs that you feel qualified for (even if they are not the best positions). You need to get your foot in the door before you can become a manager or CEO.
- Go to every career fair you can attend. Remember that there are thousands of other kids graduating at the same time as you. If you can meet and stay connected with recruiters, it increases your chances of getting a call back from one of them. Follow up through email or phone after the career fair. Be persistent and thorough, but don’t be annoying.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face/are facing in your position?

While the position I accepted is centered in accounting, the job also includes a considerable amount of legal work, which I consider to be the biggest challenge I am facing. A public utility accountant at the SCC essentially participates in regulating and auditing public utility companies (such as Dominion VA Power).

Carol Barrow
Major: MBA
Status: Alumni/Graduated 2007
Position: Full Time
Employer: VA State Corporation Commission, Dept of Public Utility Accounting
Title: Public Utility Accountant

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?

I found my full-time position by attending the spring 2008 VCU Career Fair. I introduced myself to Whitney Buyalos from HR at the State Corporation Commission (SCC) who informed me that they did not have any accounting positions open at that time, but that she would take my resume and contact me if positions did become available. Later the next week, I received an email from Kim Pate in public utility accounting at the SCC. Kim told me that Whitney had given her my resume, and that she would be conducting on-campus interviews at the VCU Career Centers. I accepted the interview, which led to a second interview, and ultimately I accepted the position of Public Utility Accountant at the VA SCC.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face/are facing in your position?

While the position I accepted is centered in accounting, the job also includes a considerable amount of legal work, which I consider to be the biggest challenge I am facing. A public utility accountant at the SCC essentially participates in regulating and auditing public utility companies (such as Dominion VA Power) requiredly the Commonwealth of VA. A big part of working in utility regulation involves preparing cases to increase or decrease a utility’s rates charged to customers. Preparing such cases requires deep analysis of legal code, complex written testimony, and oral testimony presented in hearings before the three SCC commissioners (judges).

What are some of your short-term and/or long-term goals that you plan to accomplish in your new position?

In the short term, I hope to gain as much accounting experience as I can while working for the SCC. I also plan to sit for the CPA exam, and the SCC is reimbursing me for all of my CPA review materials. In the long term, I would like to use my legal experience as a regulator to get familiar with the legal profession. Ultimately, I would like to attend law school.

Is there anything else, or any additional advice, you would like to share with the students/alumni?

The VCU Career Centers are an excellent resource for students who are seeking full-time employment or internships. It is never too early to start looking for a job, and attending career fairs is a great place to start. Instead of sticking specifically to the employers with jobs open in my major, I used the career fair as a networking opportunity. I spoke with every employer in attendance, and I ended up finding employment with an agency that didn’t have accounting jobs open at the time.

Brent Wagner
Major: Accounting
Status: Alumni/Graduated 2008
Position: Full Time
Employer: VA State Corporation Commission, Dept of Public Utility Accounting
Title: Business Analyst I

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?

I found my full-time position by first doing an internship at the company, and then following up with a company rep. at the career fair. She was from a different sector of the business than where I did my internship, so we didn’t know each other before the career fair. After talking for a few minutes I gave her my resume. She contacted me a few months later when a position opened up.

What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?

My advice is to do the following:
- Set up a career profile on multiple company websites.
- Apply to any and all jobs that you feel qualified for (even if they are not the best positions). You need to get your foot in the door before you can become a manager or CEO.
- Go to every career fair you can attend. Remember that there are thousands of other kids graduating at the same time as you. If you can meet and stay connected with recruiters, it increases your chances of getting a call back from one of them. Follow up through email or phone after the career fair. Be persistent and thorough, but don’t be annoying.

How has your education prepared you for this position?

While the position I accepted is centered in accounting, the job also includes a considerable amount of legal work, which I consider to be the biggest challenge I am facing. A public utility accountant at the SCC essentially participates in regulating and auditing public utility companies (such as Dominion VA Power).
How did you find your full time position?
I talked to several people within the company while I participated in my part-time co-op position. I found out about several different career opportunities for recent graduates within DuPont. After finding out information about the company's field engineering program, I networked with field engineers at DuPont's Spruance site in Richmond, got a better feel for the position from a variety of views, applied on-line, spoke with recruiting representatives at NSBE's career fair, interviewed, and received a very quick response with an offer.

What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
The advice I would give to students would be not to limit your job search area and to NETWORK. Be open to a variety of opportunities. Get out and talk to people. You will never know who you may come across again in the future. Also, apply and interview with several companies so you can weigh your options in terms of the job, work/life balance, and benefits. But above all else, accept the job you WANT to do. You should go for what you enjoy!

How has your education prepared you for this position?
Having bachelor's degrees in both Chemical Engineering and Chemistry has prepared me well for my first position in Research and Development. Part of my work will be performed in a research laboratory, and another part of my work will be in a small-scale plant environment. Therefore, I will be relying heavily on skills learned from both degrees (in ChemE and Chemistry) to perform my job and make decisions regarding DuPont's next new process!

What are some of your short-term and/or long-term goals that you plan to accomplish in your new position?
Short-term, I plan to work in connection with licensed engineers so I may become a professionally licensed engineer in five years. In what ever community I end up in, I plan to participate in community service oriented activities. Finally, grow as a person. Long-term, my goal is to find which business within DuPont I will feel most comfortable in.

Is there anything else, or any additional advice, you would like to share with the business students/alumni?
Enjoy the job search; even though at times it can be annoying, it can be very rewarding as well. Also, make sure to save up some money for your transition from school to work, especially if you are moving out of state. Things like furniture, travel, security deposits, utilities and food are very expensive. Also make sure you will have enough money for all of your necessities and living expenses to hold you over until that first paycheck or reimbursement check!

How did you find your current position?
I found out about my current position from the University Career Center, specifically an email sent to IS students about current openings.

What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process?
The process of looking for the right internship or job opportunity can be frustrating and sometimes humbling. However, VCU’s program makes you a valuable commodity in the IT marketplace. I have a B.S. and an M.P.A., but neither has had such a powerful impact on my ability to find gainful employment as the IS certificate program at VCU.
Alan Delahunty

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found my position by going to the career fair that Gamma Iota Sigma (Insurance Fraternity) organized in Snead Hall. I recommend to anyone interested in Insurance to get involved with Gamma Iota Sigma, and always ask questions and look to learn from the members in the Fraternity. Debbie Little, a faculty advisor of GIS, was a huge help with her knowledge and contacts. Also, in the interview, be yourself, be calm and don't get nervous.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
I am looking forward to any challenge. It will help when I sit for my P&C license in May, 2008, and will prepare me for many challenges. Entering a new environment will also be challenging and something that may take a little time getting used to, but that's life and part of learning.

Is there anything else, or any additional advice, you would like to share with the students/alumni?
Get involved with Gamma Iota Sigma and speak to Debbie Little if you are interested in Insurance.

Christopher Freeman

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
I found this internship through Rams Recruiting. I think this is a great source of opportunities available for students and recent alumni. I would advise students and recent alumni to search different companies in their field of study and apply to as many opportunities as they can. Also, another point to remember is that you can find out about different job and internship opportunities by just talking to other students and faculty.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
There are many things I believe I will gain from this internship. For one, I think I will be able to learn certain skill sets useful to the corporate world that will make me more marketable as a candidate for future positions. Also, this internship will give me the opportunity to network with successful professional people in the business world.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
One of the challenges I believe I will face will be transitioning from a student of the classroom to an employee of a successful company, but I think the School of Business has prepared me for this challenge.

Jessica Lowe

How did you find your full time position? What advice would you give to students or recent alumni regarding the job search process? What should they do?
Through Darlene Ward career counselor at VCU. As students we pay a lot for school tuition, so take advantage of the resources like the career center and the career counselors. I don’t think I could have done it without their help and guidance. Stop by, make an appointment with one of the counselors, and get someone to look at your resume. Also, join Rams Recruiting to find jobs and internships that are posted for VCU students.

What do you think you will gain by participating in this internship?
I think it is a great opportunity to gain experience and knowledge needed to succeed in today’s business world. And hopefully, it will also get my foot in the door to a full-time position at the organization where I am working.

What are some of the challenges that you think you might face in your internship?
I am worried about training at this job while still juggling classes and homework, but the internship is very flexible with my hours, and they put school as my first priority.