

Internships that CHANGE Lives

How did you end up where you are today? Career paths are unpredictable, and it is impossible to know exactly where life will lead. For these alumni, one major factor was college internships—even though it influenced them in very different ways.





Alison Eggly Klotz '98

CHANGE OF HEART

Sometimes the best thing an internship can do for people is to make them realize that this is the wrong job altogether.

Alison Eggly Klotz '98 was a communication major. She worked out one summer at Joe Dumars Fieldhouse in Shelby Township, where she met the public relations director. The job entailed meeting famous people and getting involved with professional sports.

"That's exactly what I thought I wanted to do," Alison recalls.

But when she took a PR internship the fall of her senior year, it wasn't what she expected. She spent a lot of time typing behind a desk, and she longed for more interaction with people. And yet she was so close to leaving school that she hoped she could stick it out.

Then one of the classes she took that semester pushed her over the edge. In "Perspectives on Death" with former religion professor Jerry Stewardson, she and her classmates grappled with the legacies we leave behind.

"I decided life is too short, and that I wanted to make a difference," Alison said. "What type of meaning would I have in life by just doing this?"

She started thinking about teaching. She loved kids, and she thought about the visible influence she could have on them. When graduation rolled around, she had to watch her friends

go out and get jobs and start getting paychecks. But she'd made up her mind, and began taking classes at AC to earn a secondary teaching certificate. She now teaches special education at Onsted High School, and when she thinks back, she's grateful for what the internship taught her about herself.

"If I hadn't done it, I wouldn't have been in a position to know, and I might be working at a business somewhere and be miserable," she said. "I'm very thankful."

She also appreciates the time that teaching will give her with her new family. She is currently on maternity leave after the birth of her son.

"Now I'm especially glad I did it, because now that Logan's here, I'll have a lot of vacation time."

TWO OFFERS

Joe Mierkowicz '04 actually had two internships while he was in college, and he got a job offer from both.

Joe, a business administration major, took his first internship with Detroit Diesel Corporation between his sophomore and junior years. He tried several areas of marketing, including websites, brochures and press releases.

He also worked with the visitors services department. Toward the end of the internship, the main person over him went to Brazil with a group of clients. While he was gone, Joe had to take care of a delegation from China. He was responsible for flights, hotel accommodations, transportation, dining, entertainment, and the plant tour and presentations.

"I couldn't have done it without the other people there, but for them to show so much confidence in me meant a lot," Joe said. "And it turned out to be a success."

The next summer, he interned with a marketing communications group called Riegner & Associates when a second internship with Detroit Diesel didn't work out. Over Christmas break, he had dinner with company president Bryan Riegner, who offered him a job as an account executive after he graduated.

It was a good offer, from a company he already knew, and Joe told Riegner

he'd probably take the job. But then in March he got a call from Detroit Diesel, asking him to come in to discuss a job opening. When he found out the details, he realized it was an offer he couldn't refuse.

Detroit Diesel informed Riegner & Associates of their offer, and when Joe called Riegner himself, the president was very understanding and wished him the best of luck.

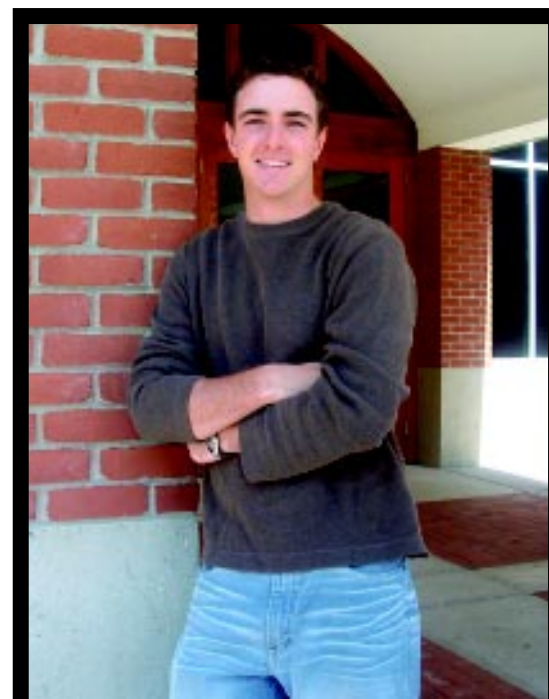
Joe says his friends tease him about getting something lined up so fast, and that his parents are thrilled. ("I'm one less kid they have to worry about, now they just have to worry about my little brother.") As for himself, he's extremely grateful his internship experiences turned out so well.

"I feel really, really fortunate and I couldn't be happier," he said. "Now I just have to graduate!" (Note: Joe did in fact receive his diploma this spring!)

TEMPERING STEEL

Kimberly Cook Hirvela '97 is a hospital social worker at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She works in the neonatal intensive care unit and the labor and delivery unit, a job that puts her face to face with some very difficult situations. An internship in college gave her the first glimpse of what it would be like to do social work in a major urban area.

Kim, a human services major who went on to earn a master of social work degree from the University of Michigan, spent the summer after her junior



Joe Mierkowicz '04



Kimberly Cook Hirvela '97

year at the Urban Life Center in Chicago. The idea behind the Center is to educate college students and others by exposing them to the life and culture of the city.

"The Urban Life Center has an excellent program," Kim said. "If nothing else, it gives you confidence. You are integrated into a large city you know nothing about – and they help you do it in a very short amount of time."

Kim took two internships through the Urban Life Center. She worked with Open Hands Chicago, an organization that offers nutritional support for people with HIV/AIDS. She also worked as a camp counselor for children with HIV/AIDS.

"I was working with kids who knew they were sick, but didn't know what they had," Kim said.

In addition, many of the children had lost parents or siblings to HIV/AIDS. The work wasn't easy, but looking back now, Kim realizes that the experience helped brace her for the future.

"If I hadn't taken the internship, I don't think I'd be prepared to do what I'm doing now," she said.

20 YEARS LATER

In the second semester of his senior year, accountancy and business administration major **Keith Updike '84** took an internship at the Chevrolet Adrian Plant (now Delphi). He studied receiving operations, was a "receiving supervisor," and made recommendations in a paper he wrote.

Keith remembers what it was like at first. The environment was completely foreign, and he was supervising union employees who had been around the block a few times.

"I walked into an 800,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility, and I'd never been in one before...It was quite a culture shock," he said. "And I'm walking in there as the college kid, and they have

25 years of experience on the job."

He must have done pretty well, though, because they offered him a job after he graduated. It set the course of his entire career.

"It got me experience in the manufacturing world, and because of that, it gave me a good idea of what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," Keith said.

Keith stayed at that plant for 13 years, working his way up from intern to manufacturing superintendent, a position with only two higher-ranking positions above it. His experience led to promotions with other companies, and he is now vice president of operations for the automotive division of Siegel-Robert, a manufacturing company based in St. Louis. Keith oversees six manufacturing plants that are spread through Tennessee, Missouri and Kentucky.



Keith Updike '84

MITCH'S COFFEE: Justin Carnes '00, a communication major, interned with the Mitch Albom Show on WJR 760 AM when he was a junior. He said he was relieved to find out that the ultra-famous Albom was a really nice guy. When Albom put Justin and another intern on the air on their last day, Albom made a crack about Justin not knowing how to talk into a microphone. Albom got a kick out of it when Justin replied, "No, Mitch, but I know how you take your coffee." **Today:** Justin isn't currently involved with radio, but his communication degree does come in handy with his side job as a professional wrestler.

IN TURN: current students

OVER BREAKFAST



When English-journalism major Tracey Gholston '06 attended the Spirit of Diversity Job Conference in Detroit during her freshman year, she was told it was just a learning experience. Freshmen don't get internships. But then over continental breakfast, she started talking with someone who turned out to be the editor of a newspaper in Wisconsin. He gave her an internship, and he plans to give her another one every summer until she graduates.

The paper is part of the Gannett Company, which owns media outlets across the country, including USA Today. His plan for her is to set her up at bigger and bigger Gannett papers through

college, after which she's almost guaranteed a job at a Gannett newspaper. Tracey, originally from Alabama, just hopes it's with a paper a little closer to home!

MEETING METALLICA

Sophomore Erin Sawden '06, a communication major, interned last summer in the PR department for Detroit rock station 101 WRIF. Not only did she gain valuable insight into how the radio industry operates, but she also got to meet and work with a lot of bands, including Metallica, Linkin Park, Chevelle, and the Foo Fighters. The station offered her another job this summer.

