



Interns Over Interim: five girls, five great plans, and how the CEL helped

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By [Lucy Casale](#)

Ever wonder what more you, a busy Ole, could add to your life, to make it that much busier? Between band or orchestra practice, softball or basketball games, essays, tests, club activities, classes, and of course, diligently checking Her Campus St. Olaf, we know you're always looking to fill up your extra milliseconds of free time! Because, clearly, you're just dying to know how to add more hectic to your day, I'll up and say it: get an academic internship!

In all seriousness, internships are a wonderful idea: not only do they add credibility to your resume, but they give you real-world experience that can either introduce you to your dream job (and future connections) or show you exactly what field of work you'll never want to try again.

While I cannot yet speak from experience, I've asked five Ole women who can (at least, about the landing-an-internship part). I've also asked the Associate Director of the Academic Internships program, Sandy Malecha, from the Center for Experiential Learning to tell you all about the process.

"You have to have internship experience," Malecha said, shuffling through a stack of folders in her modular village office (where the CEL is located). "It's imperative in this day and age." Malecha said her job boils down to helping Oles find, apply for, and secure internships, as well as complete the necessary paperwork to get academic credit for those internships. She also aids students in finding a faculty supervisor who is willing to oversee the student's work as an intern and make sure it is worthy of academic credit.

"Essentially we [at the CEL] provide the resources for students to get started on the internship search, and advise them on the process," Malecha said. "The goal is never to place students in internships; the goal is to seek out one."

Selecting a handful of folders from her stack, Malecha reads off the names of five Ole women who will have academic internships this J-Term. With each woman taking up a very different field of work (from choreography to legal advocacy), as well as traveling to very different locations across the world (from Ghana to London), these women have truly landed some incredible internships. Check them out!



Allyson Kerr '11

Come January, Kerr will be a legal advocacy intern at the Lake Superior Regional Justice Center. Located in Duluth, Minnesota, the organization offers legal counseling for victims of domestic violence.

A psychology major with a Latin American studies concentration, Kerr said she found this academic internship through a former internship she had with the justice center's sister organization, Safe Haven. Kerr said she found her original internship at Safe Haven on her own, by researching and then calling different organizations she thought might have internships involving social work and psychology.

With a passion for aiding victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, Kerr is a current advocate at SARN (St. Olaf's Sexual Assault Resource Network), and also traveled on a HECUA program through St. Olaf to Quito, Ecuador in the fall 2009. There, Kerr spent 20 hours per week working at the Casa Matilde: a house for women who were victims of domestic violence, as well as children who were abused or runaways.

Kerr says one of the motivating factors in her choice to do this type of work is its tangible results. “It’s always great to see a woman who comes to Safe Haven, who comes in with nothing, and to see that by the time she leaves, she has a place to live, a job, and she’s not going back to her boyfriend or husband anymore.”

On her work with the CEL in getting academic credit for the internship, Kerr said, “I think that they’re really helpful if you have questions – it is just kind of a long process. I think in finding the internships, you have to be self motivated.”

For her upcoming academic internship at the justice center, Kerr says she is excited to learn more about the legal and court process for victims of domestic violence. She adds, “They’ve never had a 40 hour-a-week intern, so I’m kind of doing everything.” Kerr guesses she will most likely be involved in the child care services or the group therapy services the center offers, as well as going to the court house on Tuesdays and doing ‘initial intakes:’ figuring out what type of help the women that come in are looking for.

Is she nervous about the internship? “I’m nervous about the 40 hour work week, and maybe not being fully prepared for everything,” Kerr says. “But that’s half the fun!”



Britta Anderson '12

An intern-to-be in New York, New York for the Meadow Road Arts Service, Anderson will be working with choreographer, Matthew Keefe, learning her senior piece (which Keefe will choreograph), and helping him with odd jobs. According to Anderson, these additional odd jobs range from helping Keefe edit the book he is currently writing, to possibly going to a dance advocacy conference in Washington D.C.

“Kind of an overarching theme in my internship is life in the arts and what does that mean,” Anderson said. “How do people function in the arts, how can I make a living, what is out there for me to do, beyond performing – what other skill sets do I offer.”

A dancer for 15 years and a double major in dance and criminalistics, Anderson, like Kerr, found her internship through former connections.

Keefe, a choreographer and the production manager of the American Repertory Ballet, was Anderson’s artistic director for the company she danced for in high school. Anderson she said she simply kept in contact with him and was thus able to set up an internship a few years later.

So how has the CEL helped Anderson? “They really helped me narrow down what I was going to get out of the internship. My process was a little different because I set up the internship myself, [and] for me it worked out really well because I just presented my idea and they approved it.” Anderson adds, “That’s really a strong point of the CEL: you don’t have to do what they are offering you: you can come up with something on your own and present it.”

When asked what she is most excited about, Anderson was enthusiastic. “Everything! I’ve never been to New York ... and I love to dance, so its gonna be awesome!”



Elizabeth Harness '13

With a double major in environmental studies and art, Harness, along with seven other Oles, will be an intern at the Doulos Discovery School, in the Dominican Republic: a school that funds itself through a coffee plantation and farm on its lands.

Although she was originally considering going to India through St. Olaf’s Sacred Sites art program, Harness heard about the Doulos Discovery School in her Ideals to Action class and headed to the CEL to learn more about it. When it sounded like the right fit for her, Harness began the process of applying for the academic internship with the CEL.

Currently a lead farmer at STOGROW, St. Olaf's organic farm, Harness says, "I want to have as much experience as I can with farming. I am really passionate about environmental studies, and so the farming aspect has just really clicked with me." This works out perfectly, because over J-term, Harness will be living on the farm, about an hour up a mountain from the Doulos Discovery School, along with three other girls and the full-time farmers. Her project while there will be to design an eco-tourist trail around the farm.

"We're going to be physically making the trail with machetes and other tools, and we're going to be making informational signs to go along the path [in] Swedish, German, Spanish and English," Harness said. "We're going to be working on the farm as well and possibly if we have time, we'll be visiting another eco-tourist trail." In addition, Harness said she will be doing home-stays on the weekends with families who live near the farm and school.

Her advice to Oles considering academic internships: "If you have any inkling of wanting to do something, don't hesitate because you don't know how to do it. Just go right to the CEL – there's a person there sitting at the desk – they'll help you. If you're passionate about something and you want to have more experience, the CEL will help you find something that fits you." Harness adds, "The alums are really helpful. And they love Oles!"



Jennifer Tongen '13

Soon to fly to London, England and its School For Social Entrepreneurs where she will intern all of January, Tongen admits that she is nervous about transportation – getting from her airport to the apartment she will be renting, finding her way around London – but she is more excited than nervous.

"I'm most excited to get the experience and get to know the company, because it sounds like a really interesting idea," Tongen said. "Also just to get to see London and have a whole month there so I see everything and get a feel for the life there!"

An economics major who may add an emphasis on management studies, in addition to working on a concentration in biomedical studies, Tongen estimates that she will likely be working 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Explaining the School for Social Entrepreneurs, Tongen says, "It's a school to teach business owners [whose] aim is to solve social and environmental issues how to run businesses not meant for profit but meant for solutions." Tongen says she, along with another male Ole who is also interning there, will be working for the company, both learning what they do and helping out with whatever they need.

Tongen nods to the benefits of the internship: going to England, forming contacts in a potential field of work she is interested in, and building her resume. "It all sounded good," she said, adding that she didn't see any options quite as exciting for on-campus classes over J-Term.

How did she find the internship? "I got an email from the CEL and I went and met with the guy who went [on the same program] last year," Tongen said. Since then she was hooked and went through the CEL's process of applying to make it an academic internship.

"I've never traveled alone," Tongen adds. "Going alone should be fun!"



Elizabeth Lampman '11

A sociology/anthropology and English double major with a concentration in women's studies, Lampman will spend her interim doing an academic internship with the non-profit Women in Progress organization in Ghana, Africa.

Lampman explains that Women in Progress, while helping other non-profits, supplies volunteers to the non-profit organization Global Mammias. Global Mammias gives micro-loans to women to make and sell their handicrafts, and then markets their products, essentially allowing women to build their own businesses.

Lampman says she will be mainly writing for these non-profits, including writing their annual report and quarterly update. Among other things, she will also be involved in updating Global Mammias' website and interviewing some of the women they help.

Discovering the internship her sophomore year but unable to follow through due to the confusion of switching majors, Lampman said she received an e-mail this October from the organization asking if she was still interested. Lampman was, but without financial help she would be unable to go. That's where the CEL helped her out. After applying through the CEL for two scholarships, Lampman received the Kloeck-Jenson Scholarship, which is specifically for students pursuing an academic internship related to social justice.

Since discovering she could go, Lampman talks about her excitement. "For me the most exciting part about this is to be able to apply myself to a project that's working for social change. In my opinion, giving a woman a shred of economic power can change her life dramatically and her children's, and hopefully a community."

Lampman says she would encourage Oles who want to intern or study abroad, but who don't think they can afford it, to look into scholarships that can make it a possibility. Lampman also encourages students to be flexible and not be too set on any certain plan for their life.

About her upcoming internship Lampman adds: "I've always been the social justice nerd. This is a time for me to go and be a part of something that's good."

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To any students who might be daunted by the process, Malecha has a word of advice: "Just get over your feelings of being overwhelmed and intimidated – and get your butt moving!" More gravely, Malecha adds: "We just ask that they stop in [to the CEL] Monday through Friday, anytime. They can walk in and get help from one of our student workers. And students shouldn't hesitate to say if they feel overwhelmed."

So, are you ready to head on down to the CEL? Or start researching you internship options? Bet I'll beat you to it!