



The Value of Internships

It started with a letter sent by a young woman. This was July 2007 and I remember that it caught my attention because it was a letter (as opposed to an email or phone message) and because it was well written—better than most of what I had been receiving from IU students. The young woman, like the others, wanted an internship at the magazine.

At the time, *Bloom* had been publishing for less than a year and there were no full-time employees other than myself. I had tried one university intern and it hadn't worked out. But the letter was not from an IU student; it was from a 17-year-old at Bloomington High School North.

Based on the letter and a good interview, she got the position. During her senior year she worked an hour and 15 minutes every school day as part of North's internship program. She proved herself to be a quick learner and became a paid intern for the next four years while earning a journalism degree at IU.

The young woman who wrote the letter is Lynae Sowinski, now 22 and *Bloom's* new full-time staff member. Her title is Social Media Editor; she is in charge of our website, magbloom.com. But that's only about half of her responsibilities. She also takes photographs, writes, edits, fact checks, proofreads—and does menial jobs, as do the rest of us. And she's in charge of our internship program.

Every semester, we take on two or three students who each works about ten hours a week. We also take two or three in the summer for about 20 hours per week. The first school year or summer, they work for free; after that

they get paid. Even first-time interns are paid for the stories they write.

Most internships do not end up with the students getting full-time jobs at the places where they interned—especially in this recession. But internships do help students find work in their chosen fields when they graduate. (In journalism, if you don't have an internship on your resume and clips of published work from the “real world”—as opposed to clips from student publications—well, good luck.)

A lot has been written of late in the national media about employers who use interns rather than hire full-time employees. Also, there is a lively debate about whether students are being exploited. And while it's true that few cases end up as happily as Lynae's (for both parties), internships do offer experience that cannot be duplicated in the classroom and that employers want. Good internships are coveted and so are the intelligent, hardworking students who take the initiative to get them. Like Lynae.

Congrats Cassandra

Minutes before closing the issue, we received an email with the subject “got the job!” from *Bloom* “alum” Cassandra Orton. She had just been named the new Web Editor of *The Saturday Evening Post*. A 2011 grad of the IU School of Journalism, Cassandra did an outstanding job during her internship here. Way to go, Cassandra!

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher



Lynae Sowinski.
Photo by Shannon Zahnle