

Summer Internship 2024 Testimonials

How would you describe your overall experience during the internship?

The internship felt like such a well-rounded experience. It balanced work with learning about fundraising and development in a way that allowed me to apply concepts and new themes to the work I was doing day-to-day. This meant that I really found my feet in the office and gained confidence in my work quickly. Living and collaborating with the other interns was equally a fantastic bonus on top of the professional development. We really bonded and it was great to discuss our working experiences and ideas with each other.

The internship was an exciting journey of self-discovery and learning for me. It provided practical experience, deepened my understanding of development and philanthropy, and above all laid a strong foundation for my career in Higher Education development operations. The exposure to experts in development, mentorship, and meaningful projects made it both enriching and inspiring.

What stood out to you about this internship compared to others?

To me, what stood out most about this internship was the opportunity to take full ownership of a project from start to finish, with invaluable support from the team. In many institutions, interns rarely get such a level of autonomy, but here, we were encouraged to explore our potential and contribute meaningfully. The experience was also unique in its balance between theory and practice—allowing us to understand the theoretical foundations of Higher Education development while applying those insights to the projects we were working on. This hands-on approach made the learning experience incredibly enriching and impactful.

What aspects of the program did you find most valuable?

Being embedded in a team and given a project which looked to solve real problems and make real impact made the internship a really valuable experience. Everyone I met with while carrying out my project was genuinely enthusiastic about helping me because it addressed a gap in the current alumni engagement programming. I have been in touch with my supervisor since the end of the internship, and I was so happy to hear that some of the recommendations that I made in my project were being actioned by the team!

Professional Development

Do you feel more confident in your professional abilities after completing this internship?

I feel like I started the internship with no professional experience, and since finishing I can confidently say I feel well equipped to face the professional working world and am able to advocate for the employable skills I gained during the 10-week programme. Having never worked or interned in an office, the role was the perfect way to ease into office dynamics, working within a team, reporting to a line manager and generally understanding the rhythms of professional life. I now have an array of skills, from giving presentations, handling data, carrying out fundraising-specific research and compiling progress reports. My line manager and colleagues were eager to ask what skill areas I wanted to explore and offered me workshops or resources to develop in these areas. This was a real highlight for me.

Did you have opportunities to network and build connections during the internship?

There were plenty of opportunities to network, especially through the weekly learning sessions. I got to connect closely with fellow interns I had not known much before, as well as with the experts who joined us each week. One of the highlights was attending an alumni event during the internship, where I had the chance to engage with alumni who had graduated from Cambridge decades ago. It was an amazing experience, and I am grateful for the connections I made.

Personal Growth & Impact

What did you learn about yourself during this internship?

I learned that I sometimes struggle to voice my opinion, something I am now working on. I learned that I could collaborate, engage, and contribute meaningfully in a diverse environment. But most importantly, I learned to act more and be enthusiastic.

This internship really pushed me to challenge myself, and through that, I gained a deeper understanding of both my strengths and areas for improvement. It helped me become more self-aware and gave me the opportunity to grow in ways I hadn't anticipated.

Can you share a moment where you felt particularly proud of your contributions?

When presenting my research report to my line manager, team and other relevant colleagues at the end of the internship, I felt particularly proud and assured that my work had been genuinely successful and valued. It made it clear to me that rather than doing a project fabricated for the sake of the internship, I was doing work that aligned with the working goals of my team and made some impact. Having them pick my brains on my work, ask questions and engage with my findings felt like the perfect culmination of 10 weeks of work. Presenting this at the group showcase and sharing this feeling with the other interns was equally amazing!

Seeing my project displayed at the showcase and having Development colleagues from across Collegiate Cambridge so interested to hear about my work was a highlight for me. It is amazing how much all of us achieved in 10 weeks!

Your Career

How has this internship influenced your career goals or future plans?

I got a job as a fundraising assistant in the office after the internship which I am really enjoying. But largely, the internship has shaped my future plans as I have now fallen in love with business intelligence (using data to drive business decisions) and considering building my career on that path.

This internship launched my career in Development. I didn't know what development was when I first saw the internship advertised, and wasn't sure if it was something that would suit my interests and skill set. When I read about all of the amazing initiatives that are funded through philanthropy, I was immediately interested and throughout the internship I learned about all the different facets of development and became more and more certain that it was a career path I wanted to pursue. This led me to applying to and being offered a Development Officer post at Hughes Hall, working on alumni relations and events. I would never have applied for had it not been for the internship! From here, there are so many ways that my career might progress, and I am excited to see where it takes me. I'll always be grateful to Laura and everyone who worked on the internship for creating the programme and offering me so many such a valuable opportunities within it.

This internship really helped set me up for my career. It gave me firsthand experience and a better understanding of the field, and I learned a lot of useful skills that I apply in my current job. It also helped me build a strong professional network, and I feel more confident about pursuing future opportunities because of everything I gained.

Personal Anecdotes

How would you sum up your experience in one sentence?

My experience with this internship was a perfect blend of gaining new professional skills, building valuable networks, and receiving great financial support, all of which made my transition from school to the workforce much smoother.

What would you say to someone considering this internship?

Please give it a go! As an incoming graduate with no real understanding of what development was, or how central fundraising could be to the university, I really applied on a whim and I'm so thankful that I did! The programme was the perfect way to spend a summer gaining valuable professional experience, learning about a new sector and developing valuable relationships with colleagues and fellow interns. Living in Cambridge over the summer, going to concerts at the Botanic gardens and having games nights with the interns was a lovely further addition to a great professional experience.

My internship was not only shaped by the skills I learnt and the career development it enabled me to pursue, but also by the camaraderie with my fellow interns. I had so much fun working with everyone else on learning days. We all got along and spent lunchtimes together as well as meeting up after work. It was a fantastic way to spend a summer!