2015 MATC Internship Program

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A summer with Iteris

After a great experience as a MATC intern for the first time last summer at the City of Omaha, this summer I was given another opportunity to practice my engineering skills in the real world. For a change, this time I was partnered with a private consultant, which made for a whole new experience, having only experienced the public sector prior to this internship. The company I was hired at, Iteris, Inc., is a Santa Ana based company with multiple offices around the country that focus on intelligent information solutions to the traffic management market globally. Working at the Lincoln office, I was a part of the West systems engineering unit.

Although the working environment at Iteris is completely different than that of the City of Omaha, or most public traffic engineering agencies for that matter, having gained experienced last summer in the traffic engineering field undoubtedly made me more prepared for this job. One of my first tasks upon starting the internship consisted of processing video data for a delay study being done for an ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) project in St. Louis, MO. The project, which involved the deployment of an adaptive traffic system along a corridor of Route 67, required an evaluation of performance of the signal system before and after the deployment of the adaptive system, which was done by performing delay studies at four intersections of the corridor as well as travel time studies along the entire corridor. Since I had conducted multiple delay studies at the City of Omaha, I was able to quickly engage in the project without needing as much assistance as I would have had I not been exposed to such studies in the past.

Another significant part of my internship experience was helping my supervisor with edits that needed to be made on the set of plan sheets for a project on I-69 in Michigan before they were ready for the final submittal. Because a set of plan sheets needs to be reviewed by other engineers before being approved for submittal, changes often have to be made in order to

ensure the plan sheets are presented in the best possible way to the contractor. Since most of these changes need to be made on Microstation, this proved to be one of the most important tasks I was assigned, as I was able to learn how to use a drafting software I had never used before. Like most civil engineering students, I was only required to learn AutoCad in in my classes and, therefore, had never had the chance to use any other drafting softwares. Although at first Microstation felt a little difficult to get used to, after a few weeks of practice I felt just as comfortable as I was last year using AutoCad. In the end, both softwares are used for the same purpose: drafting.

One of the most insightful aspects of this internship was experiencing the engineering world from the perspective of a private consulting firm. The first obvious difference I noticed was the fact that I was involved in projects from multiple states. For me, this was a positive change, as it meant each project was entirely different from one another. Another interesting difference I experienced was the fact that, unlike public agencies, our company has to earn its opportunity to work. Because most of the projects we, as consultants, get to work on are funded by city and state agencies, we are forced to compete with other companies that also want to be given the chance to work on the same projects. This competitive environment certainly pressures you to always do an excellent job, as one bad project could hinder your company's ability to acquire more work in the future.

This summer provided me with exactly what I needed for a complete college internship experience: an internship at a private consultant. Now, having experienced the differences between the private and public sectors, I feel much more confident about my future transition from college student to full-time civil engineer in a few semesters.