A COLLEGE INTERNSHIP—REWARDING AND AWARDED

Sixty-two percent of the University of Hartford’s recent graduates had internships that provide valuable exposure to careers of possible interest. During the spring 2015 semester, Lenny Curtis A’14, ’16, spent every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday working at a high-level internship with Staples. The Hillyer College graduate and Barney School of Business marketing major spent part of his time at the retail chain’s headquarters in Framingham, Mass., shadowing executives, learning about corporate culture, and taking part in strategic planning and analyses aimed at helping Staples maintain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Lenny spent the rest of his time at the retail level, working with a district manager at Staples’ eight stores in western Massachusetts and southern Vermont. On the retail side, he learned about the stores’ day-to-day operations, analyzed store sales, helped determine staffing levels for different time periods, and helped find new opportunities for market penetration—all while carrying a full load of classes.

It’s no wonder, then, that he was awarded the Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership’s student InternHero Award, which was presented in June “for overall excellence as a student intern, accomplishing both the educational goals of the internship and the unique work of the employer.”

Being the busy young man that he is, Lenny was not able to attend the award ceremony because, as co-chair of the Berkshire County Central South Relay for Life, he and a team of Staples supervisors and employees were taking part in that fight-against-cancer fundraiser. Barney faculty member Celia Lofink accepted the award on his behalf.

“My internship with Staples was incredible,” Lenny said. “This internship was life-changing and gave me the confidence and experience that I desperately sought.”

Lenny expects to graduate in December 2015, a semester ahead of schedule, and he has accepted a job at Berkshire Bank, where he worked last summer and part time during the fall semester.

PHOTOJOURNALIST TAKES ON SOCIAL ISSUES:

MATT EICH MFA’16

Matt Eich, a 29-year-old photojournalist from Norfolk, Va., learned in September that he would receive $10,000 from the 2015 Getty Images Grants for Editorial Photography. His project, Carry Me Ohio, includes work from 2006 to 2012 that covers the effects of poverty, heroin, and the oil and gas industries in southeastern Ohio. It will be published next year in book form by Sturm & Drang.

Matt is a second-year student in the International Low-Residency MFA in Photography program at the University’s Hartford Art School. This is his second grant from Getty Images. In 2013, he received $10,000 for an earlier work, Sin and Salvation in Baptist Town, on race in Greenwood, Miss.

The Getty Images Grants for Editorial Photography, established in 2005, support photojournalists working on personal projects and documenting important but underreported stories. Each photographer selected receives $10,000.

Richie Goins Jr. watches from the window of his parents’ trailer as cinder blocks are brought in as the foundation for his grandmother’s new trailer. Leetha Goins, her children—Timmy, 25, and Troy, 16—and grandson, Will, for whom she cares, were displaced when a drunk driver swerved off the road and crashed into their trailer. A recent study showed that the child poverty rate has increased 5.6 percent in the state of Ohio over the past five years. In the town of Chauncey specifically, 33.3 percent of those under the age of 18 live below the poverty line.

Photo taken in 2006 and used by permission of the photographer.
A professional illustrator, graphic artist, and art teacher, Brian Bowes M’16 is also a student enrolled in the Low-Residency MFA in Illustration program offered by the University’s Hartford Art School. He arrived on the University of Hartford campus this past July from his home in Santa Cruz, Calif., to begin his second of three two-week residencies. With him he carried the magical results of a yearlong book project.

When Brian was an undergraduate art major about 10 years ago, one of his drawing teachers asked him what he wanted his work to achieve. Perhaps with a bit of bravado, Brian said that he wanted his work “to last for 100 years.” As it turns out, he is about to get his wish.

“The low-residency MFA at the Hartford Art School seems just perfect to me. I have a studio in a complex with 50 other artists, but I rarely come across another illustrator,” says Brian. “The two weeks of the residency were amazing. I found the faculty and other people in the class super supportive. Not only was I getting feedback from my peers but also from people I look up to, like [HAS Professor of Illustration] Dennis Nolan and [MFA program Director] Murray Tinkelman.”

The book that Brian brought with him, The Story of the Fisherman—one of the many stories in the Arabian Nights—is a limited-edition, letterpress book that is hand bound, hand colored, and illustrated by Brian. While he drew the black line illustrations, Peggy Gotthold of Foolscap Press did the accordion binding, and Larry Van Velzer, also of Foolscap Press, did the printing. The text is a translation from the Arabic by Edward William Lane. The larger image spreads are all hand colored by Gotthold with an age-old technique called pochoir (French for “stencil”), and Brian hand-paints each title page and smaller details throughout the book. Gotthold also hand-makes each box that the books come in.

In all editions of the Arabian Nights, there is a common frame story that involves the ruler of the Persian Empire, King Shahrayar, and Shahrazad, daughter to the king’s own vizier. The core scene is the king’s bedchamber. The king has sworn to work his way through all the virgins of his kingdom, putting each to death the following morning because his former queen (and therefore all women, in his view) was without virtue.

Although Shadrazad is the new bride for the night, destined to die at sunrise after spending just a single night in the king’s bed, she has a plan. Each night, she tells the king a story that ends with a cliffhanger, and that is what keeps her alive. The king has to wait until the next night to hear the end of the tale.

“The overall design, the images, the way that the book is presented all grew naturally from the nesting nature of the Arabian Nights tales,” says Brian.

The partnership came about when Gotthold and Van Velzer attended an Artists’ Open Studios event in Santa Cruz and happened to wander into Brian’s studio. Their conversation led to a lunch and eventually to the idea of doing a book together, which then became The Story of the Fisherman.

The Story of the Fisherman has beautiful illustrations printed in a dark-blue ink and colored using a cool palette of colors. Nested within the fisherman’s story are many other tales. These stories are each printed and colored in their own palettes of brown or green. This subtle design choice indicates the level of the nested story and helps guide the reader.

“Over the course of the past year, I have been doggedly working on a project that is one of the most beautiful projects that I have ever had the honor of being a part of,” says Brian. “This book has already found a home in many university libraries across the United States as well as abroad. A copy is now in the Special Collections at Stanford University Library, and I am very proud to say that a copy is going to the U.S. Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections Division.”

And that copy of The Story of the Fisherman should be around for at least 100 years.
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—Brian Bowes MFA’16
When Selia Linowes ’15 received the email telling her she had been accepted to this past summer’s Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, her reaction was a storm of emotions. “First I put my hands over my mouth and started to cry. Then I called to my partner, Morgan, and told her that I got in. We started jumping up and down and screaming.”

The prestigious graduate-level writing program at Middlebury College’s School of English in Ripton, VT., accepted only 26 percent of applicants, according to Selia. She was one of only eight undergraduates out of nearly 200 participants.

Selia, who will graduate from the University in December, is majoring in English with a creative writing emphasis. She says she only began writing seriously when she started taking poetry courses from Ben Grossberg, associate professor of English and director of the creative writing program, during her second year. She worked on the poems she submitted with her application to Bread Loaf in classes she took from Grossberg, whom she considers her mentor.

Selia’s adventure began when she applied to Bread Loaf as an assignment for the English Capstone in Creative Writing course taught by T. Stores, also an associate professor in the Department of English and Modern Languages. The class, offered in the spring 2015 semester, is designed as a career-building experience.

“One of my capstone requirements is that students submit creative work to journals, conferences, workshops, and residencies multiple times, [or] almost every week, during the semester,” says Stores.

“Students learn how to format work and write cover letters, and they set up a system to track their submissions and begin sending work out,” Stores explains. “I always tell them to aim for both aspirational journals and those that have somewhat better odds for acceptance of work, and usually several achieve publication in small literary journals by the end of the semester.”

Bread Loaf has a long tradition of gathering emerging writers like Selia to work closely with a diverse and talented faculty. Attendees experience the intensity—and challenge—of working under the guidance of notable writers.

Selia was assigned to a 10-person workshop led by poet Tom Sleigh, whose many awards include the John Updike Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Kingsley Tufts Award, and the Shelby Prize from the Poetry Society of America. He is a Distinguished Professor in the MFA program at CUNY—Hunter College in Manhattan.

“I loved working with Tom Sleigh,” says Selia. “I was thrilled to be in his workshop.” Asked if he was tough with her work, she says yes, but that the critiques within the class had to be constructive. “When I met with him one-on-one, he was a little harsher. But I loved that. You want your work to be effective. He gave me wonderful feedback that I will apply to my future work.”

“As it turned out, August was a very big month for Selia. She had submitted three poems to the online Crab Fat Literary Magazine earlier. “I found out that the poems had been accepted about a week before I got the email that I had been accepted to Bread Loaf.

“I’ve been inspired by this experience to apply to other conferences,” she says, adding that the Bread Loaf experience helped her become comfortable introducing herself as a poet.
When Ron Campo ’80, senior business consultant at Aetna’s headquarters in Hartford, was looking for summer interns, he reached out to Donald Jones, associate professor in the College of Arts and Sciences and director of the University Honors Program.

Aetna has a large, structured internship program and a university relations team that recruits potential interns. Campo, a member of the College of Arts and Sciences advisory board, knew that students in the honors program have committed to do rigorous coursework and research, making them a good source of student talent.

“My previous experience with the honors program introduced me to many bright young people capable of taking on work assignments at Aetna,” Campo says. The relationship between Aetna and the University is one of several corporate partnerships that often lead to internships and employment for students.

“I initially was surprised by Mr. Campo’s interest in having honors students in diverse majors apply for internships and employment at Aetna,” says Jones. “Then I realized that they perfectly matched the desired skills: critical thinking, written communication, interpersonal relations, and time management.”

As a result of Campo’s query, communication majors Melissa Yellen ’16 and Parnian Emami ’16 completed internships at Aetna last summer, and both have continued working part time there during the fall semester. Jairus “Jay” Baker ’17, an economics and finance major in the University’s Barney School of Business, completed a summer internship in Aetna’s program for finance interns. He has been invited back for another internship in the summer of 2016.

Several recent graduates who were in the University Honors Program have been hired by Aetna for full-time positions. That’s a sign of the program’s growing reputation. In recent years, University honors students have been invited to present their research at a highly selective national conference, have been accepted to top graduate programs, and have been offered good jobs. To graduate with University Honors, students must complete 18 credits of honors coursework as well as a senior project or thesis.

Melissa’s internship is in Campo’s department, Life Operations, in the area of worksite marketing. Her duties include researching promotional items and marketing tools for events like employee benefits fairs, to make sure they align with Aetna’s brand.

Parnian’s internship as an eligibility consultant is also in the Life Operations department. Her duties include researching policy documents to determine the eligibility of people who file claims. She also gets involved in event planning, which is one of the areas she would like to pursue after graduation.

Both Melissa and Parnian say they love the people and the culture at Aetna, which they describe as very caring and positive, and they appreciate the opportunity to work at a large corporation to see if it is a good fit for them.

“The experience I’ve gotten there is priceless,” Parnian says. Jay was contacted about his internship by an Aetna recruiter through LinkedIn. He was accepted into Aetna’s finance internship program, which last summer included 35 interns from across the country.

Assigned to the Corporate Risk Management department, he did large-scale data analysis, particularly in the area of workers’ compensation. He will return to the program next summer, and after graduating in 2017, he may be offered a spot in Aetna’s three-year Financial Leadership Development Program.

Melissa, Parnian, and Jay have high praise for the University Honors Program, saying that they enjoy the small classes, challenging material, and the program’s emphasis on critical thinking and looking at things from different angles. They say the program has given them great preparation for the workplace, and Campo agrees.

“I plan to continue working with the honors program at the University of Hartford to tap into this pool of incredible talent,” Campo says. “Honors program interns have experienced great success working here, and we have benefited from their unique contributions and perspectives.”
Faces of people standing in the piazza look up, peering into the sky to find the source of a buzzing sound. Some are local residents drawn out onto the Piazza del Carmine and into the March sunshine by curiosity. Others are students in the University of Hartford’s Master of Architecture program in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture.

“Here it comes,” yells one of the students as they practice maneuvering the drone over the area of the Piazza del Carmine. The drone comes with an app that allows one of the students to use a smartphone to direct the camera on board. Another student uses a remote control to guide the drone. After a bit of practice, they have learned to coordinate their adjustments. The students are in Florence, Italy, on an assignment for their graduate architectural design studio course, taught by Imdat As, assistant professor of architecture.

Twenty-one graduate architecture students spent spring break 2015 studying centuries-old structures using 21st-century technology. In addition to the assignment at Piazza del Carmine, the students also traveled to nearby Fiesole, an Etruscan town north of Florence that was founded in the ninth to eighth centuries BC; visited an archaeological site and a Roman theater; and hiked to the Pietra Serena (sandstone) quarries of Monte Ceceri, which were mined beginning in the Etruscan period.

The group visited approximately two dozen different piazzas in the city of Florence before settling on the Piazza del Carmine for study. When they arrived, the underutilized piazza was functioning primarily as a neighborhood parking lot—something the city of Florence wanted to change. The primary goal of the assignment was to rethink the use of the piazza and come up with new plans.

In the past, the students would have taken photographs of the piazza, measured distances by hand with tapes, and made sketches. All that changed when they unpacked the drone, which arrived in the mail the day before the group set off for Florence.
It was Professor As who suggested incorporating a camera-mounted drone. As it turned out, there were multiple benefits.

“With the drone, the students were able to take elevations on all the surrounding buildings quite easily and even from the rooftops, which normally would not be possible,” says As. “The drone took photographs and video, and greatly improved the accuracy of the measurements while saving time.”

“The drone is a new tool that allows architects to render the built world that they work in,” agrees Michael J. Crosbie, professor and chair of the Department of Architecture. “This technology is already becoming indispensable for architecture students to capture views of existing buildings and urban spaces, survey sites, replicate building details, and see architecture in new and exciting ways.”

The students were divided into four teams—one team surveyed the site, prepared building-use and building-height maps as well as landmark, open-space, and public-transit maps and the like; another team prepared digital 3D models and did digital surveys; the third team built the physical model; and the fourth traced the history of the site by collecting historical maps and photos to show the site’s development over time.

Notable among the historic buildings surrounding the piazza is the medieval Church of Santa Maria del Carmine (begun in 1268), from which the piazza takes its name. Also present are retail shops, residences, and commercial businesses.

One of the project requirements was to solve the need for parking by designing an underground garage with the capacity for 200 cars. Many of the students also incorporated a performance space on the piazza for concerts.

After returning from Italy, the students spent the rest of the semester completing their designs. They used software to stitch together photos taken by the drone to create 3D images. Those images were used to print 3D models, based on their plans, using the 3D printers in the architecture studio. Students each developed a separate plan, and their work was reviewed by a jury of faculty and working architects at the end of the semester.