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Anderson County Attorney's Office Internship Study

My internship working at the Anderson County Attorney's Office this past summer provided me with the unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the legal field and better understand the daily responsibilities of an attorney working in public service. Before I began working I had a slight interest in pursuing a legal career, but I did not fully understand what that would look like actually working in the field. Throughout my time at the office, I was able to observe legal proceedings and mediations, as well as help with any administrative tasks that were needed like writing memorandums or ordering certified reports to submit as evidence for a case. In this role I also had the privilege of interacting and forming relationships with other staff members who are deeply involved in serving the local community. This experience really strengthened my interest in attending law school and gave me a clearer idea of what skills are needed and the expectations that come along with being a lawyer.

One of the most impactful parts of my internship was the opportunity to actually contribute directly to a case. About halfway through the summer after I had gained enough experience, I was given the chance to draft up a full court order which was very exciting but also challenging. This experience allowed me to challenge myself and apply my critical thinking skills and close attention to detail to make my first attempt at writing in a real legal context. This also gave me a deep appreciation for the close attention to detail required in legal writing because it is very different from typical academic writing I have done at Clemson. Every single

word and phrase must be carefully chosen to ensure clarity and accuracy. Being trusted with this responsibility made me feel more confident in my abilities and showed me that I am capable of contributing in a professional legal environment. I was very thankful for this opportunity because most people do not get to gain experience like this before law school.

Another key aspect of my experience interning this past summer was the exposure I had to the structure of the court system. At the beginning of each week, I had the opportunity to join the county attorney and attend the meetings held on Monday mornings with the judge and the attorneys of the cases on the docket that week. In this meeting, they discussed the upcoming trials and outlined what the week ahead would look like. Sitting in on these meetings gave me insight on how cases are organized and prepared for trial. It also helped me see how legal work is truly collaborative behind the scenes because attorneys and judges must communicate clearly and efficiently to ensure that everything runs smoothly. These meetings provided me with a unique back stage perspective that would have been impossible to experience in a classroom setting.

In addition to my work inside the office, this internship gave me a new appreciation for local government and the role it plays in our everyday life. Most of the political conversations we are exposed to on a daily basis focus on the things at a federal level, which can make it easy to overlook the importance of local government. However, through this experience, I realized that local government often has a more direct and immediate impact on our communities and everyday lives than we realize. The county handles big decisions about infrastructure and public resources that affect lots of individuals on a personal level. Now I truly see that the work being done at the local level is incredibly important to our everyday lives.

One of the most eye-opening experiences from this internship was the opportunity to attend the bi-weekly Anderson County Council meetings. Sitting in on these meetings allowed me to really see how many local decisions are made and how citizens have the opportunity to come speak their feelings on issues before a vote happens. I observed many discussions about the community's needs and how that translates into the policy decisions made by the county council. These meetings highlighted how accessible the local government can be when looked at in comparison to our federal government. At the local level the people of the community truly have the opportunity to be heard and be involved in the decision-making process. This experience changed my perspective and made me realize how important it is to stay informed and engaged with our local government even though most of the political noise today comes from federal politics.

In addition to all of the professional experience I gained working in the office, this internship also gave me incredible networking opportunities. I was invited to attend various local events where I met local people from all different professions. One particularly memorable experience was attending the grand opening of the brand new Iva Library down the road from Anderson in Iva, SC. At this event, I had the opportunity to meet many of our local leaders and people involved in the government. One person that stuck out to me from this day is Logan Kipling, who serves as a liaison for Senator Lindsey Graham in the Pendleton area. Having the privilege of meeting and interacting with people at events like this gave me a broader perspective on how law, politics, and community engagement often intersect. These networking experiences were incredibly valuable because they helped me begin building professional connections in my community and gain valuable insight into potential career paths within the legal and public service fields.

Throughout the internship, I also learned how much legal work happens behind the scenes. Before this I had a picture in my head of what it was like to be an attorney and it involved spending hours in a courtroom arguing a case but that is very far from reality. I quickly realized that most of an attorney's time is spent doing research and deep preparation. Having the opportunity to observe this process made me understand the importance of organization, time management, and attention to detail. Even small little errors can have major consequences so it is important to stay focused and be as accurate as possible in legal work.

Not only did I gain insight into the legal process, but I also developed stronger communication skills during my time at the county. Whether it was simply listening and taking notes during meetings or asking thoughtful questions, I became very aware of how communication plays a critical role in a professional setting. The attorneys and staff at the Anderson County Attorney's Office demonstrated a high level of professionalism that I strive to replicate especially when dealing with sensitive issues that are difficult to discuss. Observing this helped me understand how to even better communicate with others clearly and respectfully which I know will be essential in my future career.

This internship has had a significant impact on my future career interests. It did not discourage me in the slightest, in fact it absolutely confirmed my desire to pursue a law career. It gave me a realistic perspective on what the profession entails and helped me understand both the challenges and the rewards. Working in a county attorney's office also highlighted the importance of public service within the legal field. I gained a deeper appreciation for how legal professionals can make a direct impact on their communities by ensuring that laws are upheld and that individuals and the county are represented fairly. This has made me more interested in pursuing a legal career in South Carolina so that I can contribute to my local community.

This internship also encouraged me to really start thinking about the type of legal work I might want to pursue. I enjoyed so many aspects of this experience, but I also realize that different areas of law require different strengths and skills. This has motivated me to continue exploring my options as I move forward in my education and eventually enter into law school.

The classes that I have taken at Clemson played a huge role in helping me succeed during this internship. Specifically Legal Environment of Business, Fundamentals of Public Relations, and Public Speaking served me very well in this role. The courses that really focused on communication, writing, and critical thinking were valuable here because I was honing those skills daily in the office. These skills set me up for success and allowed me to better understand and write professional documents, as well as be able to engage in intellectual discussions with other professionals in the office. My rigorous academic experience so far at Clemson without a doubt helped me approach this internship with a strong work ethic and willingness to learn.

However, there are areas where additional coursework could have been beneficial. Having prior exposure to legal writing or basic legal terminology would have made the transition into the internship smoother. While I was able to learn a great deal through hands-on experience, a foundational understanding of legal concepts would have allowed me to contribute more confidently from the beginning.

Overall my internship at the Anderson County Attorney's Office was a highly valuable experience that I am very grateful for. It allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the legal profession and truly confirmed my choice to pursue a law degree. I can truly say that every aspect of this internship contributed to my growth both personally and professionally. This experience has provided me with a strong foundation as I move forward in my career path and it has solidified my goal of attending law school and pursuing a career in the legal field.