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My experience interning this summer has greatly enhanced my abilities as a reporter. People always say that the best learning experience is from the hands-on training at your internship, because you can only learn so much from a book. After interning at the *North Kingstown Standard Times* for the past two and a half months, I strongly agree with this statement.

The Standard Times is a weekly publication consisting of three other employees. Working at a small publication was a positive experience for me and it provided me with the opportunity for hands-on training in all journalism aspects that I feel I wouldn't receive in the classroom. I was able to sit down and learn how to use the Quark Xpress page design program, which I am now comfortable using. After the second time learning how to work the program, I was able to sit down at my own computer and play around with the program and layout some pages. I don't think at a larger publication an intern would be provided the opportunity to do so.

I was also able to quickly become familiar with the town of North Kingstown and its people by interviewing many members of the community, both young and old. I wrote about one to three stories per week, all depending on what was going on and what my editor had for me to do. I was able to enhance my writing abilities by having my stories edited by my editor, Chris Machado, and then go back and correct any mistakes myself. My published stories have ranged from school committee meetings, high school graduation, a family who adopted four children, an antique car show, two local girl scouts who received the highest award in girl scouting, among other feature stories. I was also able to become familiar with using a professional photographer's camera and took my own photographs for publication.

The classes and skills from journalism department I've been taught for the past three years were put to the test at the start of my internship. I felt as though I was very prepared for my internship thanks to the many journalism classes I had taken and the journalism department teachers who have taught them. Perhaps the single most important class that helped me during my time at *The Standard Times* was the Public Affairs Reporting class, JOR 320. This class essentially provided me with a practice run of covering a local town, with my town coincidentally being North Kingstown. I was able to remember important public figures and issues that were plaguing the town when I first covered it as a student in the fall of 2006. Only this time around, the articles that I wrote would not be seen by my professor, but by my editor and the local townspeople that read my articles in the paper.

The Public Affairs Reporting class greatly prepares our students to succeed in working at the local level. Without this class, I feel as though it would have been tough and a bit overwhelming for me to get used to covering and writing about the town of North Kingstown. One assignment we had during the class was to go to the police station and take a look at the police logs. I also did this while I was at *The Standard Times* when I

wrote the police logs. I remember at first feeling intimidated and not knowing what to do that first time I went to the police station during my class, but had I not had the opportunity to do so during the class, I would not have know what to do.

I had never been too fond of writing feature stories until working at *The Standard Times*. Breaking and hard news stories had always appealed to me and I always steered away from the feature stories. I had taken the feature writing class, JOR 321, at URI this past spring semester and I have noticed that many of the skills I had learned in that class has helped me to write my feature stories. By writing mostly feature stories at my internship, I have realized that I enjoy writing feature stories. It gives me a chance to be creative and tell a person's story, which I thoroughly enjoy doing. One of the most pleasant stories I have written this summer was about a North Kingstown family who adopted children from China and Ethiopia. It felt great to tell their story, the struggles and the happy endings included. It was rewarding to know that their story could be told to the town and the thanks I received for the article made it all worth it.

Other connections I have seen between my journalism classes and my internship include journalism ethics. Many times when I was out conducting an interview, my interviewees would offer to buy me a beverage or give me other free stuff. Having learned that accepting something from an interviewee was unethical, I knew I had to decline the offer. In fact, I wrote a story about an antique car show that the Wickford Honey Dew Doughnuts puts on every week and every time I went in to get a coffee before going to work, the owner always tried to give me a free coffee. Of course I had to decline and pay him the money.

Because I had previously worked as a reporter and news editor for *The Good 5 Cent Cigar*, a four-times-a-week publication, I felt as though nothing was a surprise to me. I had already had the experience of working at a newspaper for the past two years, even though that experience was just at the college level. I knew what to expect with interviewing public figures and other people in the community, meeting deadlines and producing articles, and if not had an advantage over someone else. I also knew that sometimes you have to be persistent when on a tight deadline and when nobody returns your phone calls. However, with all the articles I have written, I was still able to improve on my interviewing and writing skills throughout the summer.

I strived to produce my best pieces because I knew that what I wrote would reach a far greater audience rather than a college population. One thing that was perhaps difficult to get used to was the fact that *The Standard Times* was a weekly publication. I had an entire week to work on my stories which was a change for me. I had been so used to working on a tight deadline with the *Cigar*, but working at *The Standard* opened my eyes to weekly publications. Yes, there is more time to work on producing a quality story, but there isn't much room for breaking news stories in a weekly.

The internship class work that went along with the internship was helpful. The handouts about job searching and creating a resume were beneficial because in a year I will have to go out into the real world and search for a job. I am fortunate that the class provided me

with the opportunity for my resume and cover letter to be critiqued. I appreciate the opportunity to do so because it had never been critiqued by anyone other than some of my classmates. Now I feel that with a few additions after this year, both my resume and cover letter will be ready to be sent to potential employers. When I went for my interview for my internship, I admit I was a little nervous. It was one of my first “real” job interviews and I wasn’t sure what to expect. The handouts on interviews helped me understand what I might expect the next time around with questions regarding pay among others.

Overall, I feel that I had an all-around positive experience at my internship. I was provided with the opportunity to do all aspects of journalism which included writing, editing, page design and taking photographs, which will prove to be beneficial during my final year at URI. I wasn’t treated as an intern at *The Standard*, but as a regular employee which I think helped motivate me to do the best that I could.

I believe I have met all of the journalism internship course goals and have put together a well-critiqued resume and cover letter. Having these important pieces completed as a requirement for the class ensures those both have been looked at and are on the right track toward reaching perfection. I think after working this summer at the *Standard Times* I am prepared to enter the workforce and will apply what I have learned to my classes and to the *Cigar* this year as I will serve as one of the managing editors.

I would recommend to any journalism student looking for a great, hands-on learning experience to consider interning at *The North Kingstown Standard Times*.