

Communication and Media Studies Major shines in CDC internship, during pandemic



Jan'na Reed puts her major in Communication and Media Studies and minor in Film to work at the CDC

JAN'NA REED

MAJOR: **Communication and Media Studies**

MINOR: **Film**

GRADUATION: **Fall 2020**

INTERNSHIP: **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

Jan'na Reed's internship with the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) helped transform her from Communication and Media Studies (CMS) student, to a rising professional in the field. In February 2020, just as the Global Health Emergency of coronavirus-2019 was being classified as a pandemic, Jan'na was already working with the CDC at the Corporate Square location in Atlanta, completing her internship, and putting into practice what she had learned in her courses throughout her years of study so far.

ON SEARCHING AND APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP

Jan'na remembers the day she read an email that had been sent to all CMS majors about this opportunity with the CDC. "I didn't think I had much of a chance to get it, but I still applied," she recalls. Three months later, Jan'na had follow-up from the CDC, with a phone interview. During the interview, her interviewer asked about Jan'na's writing experience and ability to self-manage. "But then, I was asked about specific communication strategies, including the inverted pyramid. As the interviewer got into specifics, it was a little more challenging. I thought she would just look at my work and make her decision based on that. Thankfully, I knew what she was referring to, but I wasn't expecting to be grilled like that."

INTERNAL PITCHING AND TECHNICAL WRITING

"The work I did daily depended on the project we were working on at the time. Sometimes I worked on event concept notes, or implementation or communication plans. I had a lot of administrative duties, too. But I also learned that pitching is everything. It doesn't matter how much of a good idea you have, if you can't sell it to upper management. I didn't realize I would be writing for upper management and pushing for my ideas to be used to reach an external audience."

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CMS COURSEWORK

Reflecting on the connections between what she learned in classes, and the work she did at the CDC, Jan'na notes, "The CMS courses that stand out to me now are Writing for Digital Media, Introduction to Public Relations, Corporate Communication Design, and Digital Imaging. I'd also say podcasting would be a good course to take. During my internship, they expressed interest in creating their own podcast, so this would be a great skill to have."

Before starting the internship, Jan'na was confident in her competence as a writer, and knew that she would be able to apply that skill in a work environment. "I guess I didn't understand how important it is to have a diverse skillset. All the professors tell you this, but you don't know, until you experience it. They appreciated that I was able to use Adobe Suite, and that I could assist them with getting short films cut. Understanding the value of all of my skills made me realize different positions I can consider. My whole resume changed after realizing that as well."

ON TECHNICAL WRITING FOR THE CDC DURING A PANDEMIC

Jan'na applied for this internship before Coronavirus-2019 had become a global reality. "When the pandemic hit, I didn't fully understand what this might mean to my internship. I wasn't sent home until February, and there wasn't much information forthcoming at first," Jan'na recalls. Jan'na worked with the Division of Global HIV and TB (DGHT), and as the pandemic carried on, she was called on to create content for stakeholders, as well as content about COVID-19, including an article on how DGHT countries were preserving TB and HIV care during the COVID crisis, and how the initiatives previously established in these countries were aiding in the early response to COVID.

Jan'na reflects on the challenges of the level of technical writing she needed to produce. "Coming into the internship opportunity, it was overwhelming. I didn't understand jargon being used, so I came home every day and read about HIV and TB. The work was rewarding because I could see that my effort actually paid off. I didn't have any public health experience, but learned by looking at scientific journals daily. It was rough."

Jan'na also notes that having a great internship supervisor helps. "My supervisor was a journalism major with a very artistic side to her. She encouraged me to work through hurdles, and learn lots of new things in a short space of time. Having a supervisor with high standards helped me learn material much faster."

Faith Carmichael, Lead for Stakeholder and Policymaker Communication in the Division of Global HIC and TB, was Jan'na's supervisor during her internship and offers glowing feedback about Jan'na's work ethic and skillset. "Jan'na took on the challenges of data storytelling by analyzing complex materials and figuring out how to put a compelling face on the data and tell a story so that it moves the reader. Jan'na was competing on par with, or above some of the graduate students we've seen."

Carmichael also reflects on the impact Jan'na made at the CDC because of her soft skills, noting that just about everyone who met Jan'na had positive feedback. "When Jan'na joined us, she made a point of finding the woman who had selected her resume and personally thanking her for the life-changing opportunity she had facilitated," she reflected.

On the impact of Jan'na's work ethic and skillset, Carmichael also reflected, "Very honestly, neither Clayton State nor your Communication and Media Studies program were on my radar before this. Seeing Jan'na at work makes me wonder what about the Clayton State program has developed such a stellar student and such a strong contender, in terms of the breadth and depth of her skillset, able to do everything from writing a fact sheet to editing a video. She was doing things in a way that she demonstrated that she was not intimidated by any of it."

Jan'na Reed graduated in December 2020 with a major in Communication and Media Studies, and a minor in Film.