

Talina Van Overeem, Despite Age, Interns at MUSC

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She was the only person in the office who was too young to vote.

Too young to join everyone for happy hour.

Too young to have her high school diploma yet.

But she was not too young to keep up.

In fact, they were so impressed that they hired her twice. This past summer was senior Talina Van Overeem's second year as an intern for MUSC's Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics— an internship that was made just for her.

But it wasn't her substantial resume as a regular volunteer at MUSC, a completer of PLTW's Health Science Cluster, and, upon graduating in the spring, a certified nursing assistant, that got her the job.

In fact, it was one of her Boy Scout leaders.

A member of a co-ed branch of the Boy Scouts of America, Talina regularly interacts with various leaders, many of which work in General Internal Medicine unit at MUSC. One in particular, Dr. Patrick Mauldin, the professor and director of health systems, research, and policy, took notice of her work ethic and interest in healthcare.

"He pulled a couple of strings and got me the job", Van Overeem said. "It was kind of a leap of faith for them."

A leap that the department was glad they made, as she quickly impressed them with her capability and efficiency. "I was able to take a load of work off a lot of their backs," Van Overeem said. "They were thrilled with the work I had done."

Much of what she did was involved data management, like sifting through articles detailing the results of new research to find repeated, and therefore reputable, pieces of information and organizing them to be sent out to physicians. Wading waist deep in statistics and lingo, she helped to bolster the fight against the opioid epidemic. The chart that she helped make

set “guideline recommendations for calculating morphine milligram equivalents” or, in English, the recommended prescription amounts for clients, explained in terms more familiar to doctors.

It was a lot of work. For each of the eight weeks of the internship, Van Overeem clocked in about 30 hours— not counting the time she spent stuck in traffic, “hitting five o’clock traffic coming over the Ravenel was like, the worst part of my day.” Laughing, she said “I don’t want to become an adult.”

But she was already acting like one. Masquerading her age behind her work ethic, Talina held her own in an office full of older professionals. While everyone was welcoming, it was easy to feel detached. She said that while she was learning a lot “it was very isolating because I was the only teenager in the office— and the one person I did talk to went and had to get carpel tunnel syndrome.”

The healthcare field is definitely on Van Overeem’s mind for her future, and thanks to this internship, exactly what she wants to do is a little bit clearer. “I learned I definitely do not want to go into data management”, Talina said, citing that the day-to-day desk work was not something that appealed to her.

Still, the internship opened up doors for her in the hospital. “They [the General Internal Medicine Unit] have links throughout the hospital,” Van Overeem said. “I got to see a couple of surgeries and shadow a couple of professions I wouldn’t have normally seen if I had just applied mainstream through MUSC’s website.”

The work may not have been glamorous, but it gave Van Overeem a glimpse of what her future could look like. As to whether or not she’ll be going back for one last summer, she said that “depends on a few things.”