Tucker Center Internship Program

The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota instituted an Internship Program for undergraduate students in the summer of 2008. It has been one of our most important—and impactful—initiatives in that it highlights the various ways we fulfill our three-fold mission of interdisciplinary research, education and community outreach. The purpose of our Internship Program is to mentor, educate, and provide a quality research experience where students work collaboratively with Tucker Center faculty and graduate students on cutting-edge projects. Interns are exposed to the many facets of how a “first of its kind” cutting-edge Research Center operates. Our interns receive a first rate, and first hand, experience by participating in a full spectrum of research opportunities including literature reviews, data collection, entry, and analysis. Our interns also synthesize results using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and are engaged in manuscript preparation.

Since its inception our Intern Program attracts a competitive pool of applicants—the best and brightest students who are passionate about and committed to making a difference in the lives of girls and women through their sport experience. Many of our interns credit their time in the Tucker Center as inspiring them to pursue a graduate education. Currently, our internships are unpaid even though the time commitment can range from 10-30 hours per week across an 8-10 week time period, depending on the goals and availability of the student. As we approach the 20th anniversary of the Tucker Center in 2013, we are committed to find a way to provide some financial support to these outstanding young individuals.

Nine students from a variety of educational and personal backgrounds have completed our Internship Program while gaining valuable professional and life experiences. Four of these interns have been McNair Scholars, funded from a federal program in the Department of Education designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented but have demonstrated strong academic potential. Though they receive scholarship monies, they do not get financial support for being part of our Internship Program.

We have been highly successful in helping students gain the experiences they need to successfully pursue and complete their degrees. Evidence of our interns’ “record of excellence”: 3 of the 4 McNair scholars have completed their M.A. degrees, 4 former interns are currently in doctoral programs, and 2 interns from last summer are currently finishing their undergraduate degrees and plan to pursue graduate education.

We should emphasize that our interns played an important role in producing four manuscripts in prestigious, peer-reviewed scholarly journals.


For your information, we have provided a brief bio and comments from some of our former interns about their experience at the Tucker Center.

**Erin Morris (2008 intern):** Received her M.A. in Recreation from Clemson University in 2012, currently a first-year PhD student in the Recreation, Sport, and Tourism Department at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

*The internship was a fantastic opportunity for me. It gave me the opportunity to do graduate level research as an undergraduate. This experience and Dr. LaVoi’s guidance helped prepare me and guide me in writing my undergraduate thesis and prepare me for the research that I would do during my master's degree. The internship also introduced me to the greater field of sociology of sport and the research being done in the field. I also appreciated the guidance that Dr. LaVoi gave us in terms of preparing us for graduate degrees (tips for applying to graduate programs, choosing advisors) and setting up meetings with other TC researchers so that we could learn from their perspectives and about their research as well. This was valuable information that I used when applying to masters programs.*

**Sarah Hammon (2008 intern), Doctoral Candidate and Teaching Fellow in Counseling Psychology, University of North Texas.**

*I strongly believe that my research internship at the Tucker Center was one of the main experiences that set me apart from other candidates applying to graduate school. As a student applying to a PhD program directly following completion of my Bachelor’s degree, I believe my experience at the Tucker Center allowed me to be competitive with students applying with Master's degrees. In addition, my internship at the Tucker Center greatly enhanced my ability to critically consider research, increased my curiosity about issues in the field, and introduced me to many professionals using their research to make a difference. As a graduate student, I continue to use so much of what I learned at the Tucker Center on a daily basis.*

**Alicia Johnson (2009 intern):** Received her M.A. in Sport Psychology, Springfield College (2011); currently enrolled as a Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior PhD student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is a Research Assistant in the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society where she is managing a grant established to carry out Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Empowering Women and Girls through Sport Initiative.

*I felt incredibly privileged to be selected as an intern for the summer of 2009. I commuted from Mankato and every minute of driving time was fully worth it. The internship continues to grow in meaning for me as I develop into a scholar. At first, I was simply excited to be exposed to and work with such influential scholars. As time went on I started to feel like I was truly part of the Tucker Center, which to me meant that I was part of a greater cause. This greater cause, advocating for girls and women in
sport, has become part of my identity. It’s who I am and what I do. The academic and personal growth I accomplished through my experiences at the Tucker Center will forever remain part of me and will push me to continue fighting and advocating for girls and women in sport around the world.

Emma Leyden (2012 intern): Currently enrolled in the Department of Psychology at Macalester College, St. Paul, MN.
My Tucker Center summer internship made a huge impact on my life. Before my internship, I had a lot of passion for learning about women and sport, but I had no outlet for my questions and concerns. In addition, I often felt that my concerns were invalid, and could certainly not turn into some sort of career. However, during my internship, the Tucker Center opened my eyes to see the many paths that I know I can now take that will lead me to creating positive change for women and girls in sport. I am so grateful to the Tucker Center for starting me off in a field I know I am meant to work in. I had an invaluable opportunity of helping both Dr. LaVoi and Dr. Kane with their ‘sex sells’ study and through this process, I learned about, and was a part of, the tedious, but rewarding path it takes in order to produce a well-done published study. Every day I felt so much admiration for the Tucker Center staff and how hard they work towards their mission. This internship has further solidified my feelings that this work really matters and that there are many people working towards creating positive change. I cannot thank the Tucker Center enough for being a huge helping hand in starting me off in a field I know I am meant to work in.

Terrance Jordan (2008 McNair Scholar and intern): Earned a MA degree in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Sport Psychology (2010) at Georgia State University, a Master’s of Arts degree in Counseling Psychology at the University of Minnesota (2012) and is currently a Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at Georgia State University. The internship in the TC meant a great deal to me as an undergraduate student. As an intern I gained experience in writing literature reviews and conducted a quantitative content analysis on racial representations of women and men’s intercollegiate basketball coverage on espn.com. I have always had a strong commitment to examining social inequalities and the Tucker Center supported me in incorporating issues around gender and race into my research agenda. The internship was a valuable experience because it laid the foundation to enhancing my skills as a researcher.

To learn more about the Tucker Center Internship Program and all of our former interns, please visit our website at http://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/about-internship.html