

Hello, my name is Samuel Perry. In the summer of 2023, I took up an internship opportunity to work at an Allstate office. My job had me in constant communication with people from all walks of life. This internship allowed me to better understand and focus on observing how others interacted with one another within and outside of this institution. After my time at Longwood University studying sociology, it has allowed me to notice more than before. It has given me new perspectives on people and the society that I live in. My internship allowed me to better understand how people interacted with one another in a more formal setting compared to that of a college setting, which I was familiar with.

My job as admin manager had me busy with various tasks. The daily first task I was given dealt with basic everyday operations for the institution to function normally. My first task was collecting mail. Later on through the internship, I then was tasked with opening the appropriate envelopes and entering information as requested. My second daily task involved shredding documentation, which was standard policy for privacy reasons. Eventually, as time went by I was taught about the phone systems and how they operated along with the various systems that Allstate has in place to keep track of information and data. Once I became familiar with the phone and other Allstate systems, I started to take phone calls, make phone calls, and help people with their individual policies. Typically, I would help take payments, send emails, and make endorsements, aka edits, to policies to make sure they are updated as requested by the insured. There were a few instances where a coworker and I would go to what was known as a “lead share meeting.” A lead share meeting is made of many different business owners. The point of this group is to network with one another for the purpose of helping one another succeed in their own business. As I stated there are many different positions in the lead share group.

There has been a real estate agent, a federal credit union representative, a non-profit medical center representative, guest speakers, and much more. Each person brings forward their own perspective from their respective professions which can help another person in the group become aware of other perspectives that they may have not been aware of.

There are several skills I have picked up from working at Allstate during my internship. The first skill I had to work on was improving my communication. I learned how to use the phonetic alphabet when interacting with customers. Due to the world being full of different accents and nationalities sometimes letters are said in such a way it may be difficult to pick up on. Like how a “Q” or “U” can sound similar or how a “three” or “E” can sound similar with some accents. Being able to clarify this information is absolutely essential to the job to be able to provide good customer service. A second skill I developed was how to communicate more effectively over the phone and by email. I wasn’t a person who would talk on the phone much. At my internship, I had to learn how to talk to complete strangers about their policies. More so I had to learn how to communicate with an upset individual and learn how to communicate in a way that would help resolve the issue or calm them down from their boiling point so that we could help them. When it came to emails I had to learn certain terminology that was common in the business so that I was able to communicate more effectively with customers and insured policyholders.

I believe there are going to be many things that I will take away from my time at my internship at Allstate. One of the biggest takeaways I will take will be what I learned from Longwood and noticed in my internship, deviance is apparent in all societies and within institutions. In other words, there are many forms of deviance. I had taken notice that deviance was apparent when it came to some insured policyholders. Many of them would purchase a

policy with Allstate and then not end up paying their bill. I connect this to deviance because an insured policyholder, at one point in time, had chosen to get a policy of their free will. They are aware that there are premiums, aka the amount owed for the policy to stay in effect. A small portion of people would refuse to pay what they had originally signed up for. This is an act of deviance since they refuse to pay their bills which they were expected to pay. Another takeaway will be more about the functions of class. At Longwood, I have learned about the concept of class, typically in conjunction with power and wealth in many sociology classes. One thing that I noticed at my internship was the separate distinction of classes and how they interacted with my coworkers and me as well as how they constructed their appearance. The higher class individuals, when they would call, would typically be calm when it came to paying their policy bills while those who were lower class seemed to be more agitated for the same reason. I connected this directly to the money aspect of the relationship. When dealing with both kinds of people I must be aware of how I conduct myself to be able to de-escalate the situation and help the individual with their issue. The idea is that those who are higher class are also those who have vast amounts of wealth so they have less reason to worry about their payments, unlike those who are lower class who are more agitated due to not having as much wealth. This being said, it is important to remember to be serious when dealing with people and something that can inevitably affect them. While also remembering to be myself so as to not come off as robotic or monotone. Trying to find a blend of the two is important as to provide a better service to the customers and insured policyholders.

Overall I'd say I enjoyed the internship opportunity for many reasons. The internship had me overcome many fears as well as personal issues that I have. One of them is my struggle with making conversation with strangers. I've struggled all my life when it comes to interacting with

other people. Mainly for the fact I can never seem to find what to say or find out ways to connect to people. If I can not connect to people beyond my own social sphere then I will struggle my entire life. At my internship, I pushed myself to improve my social skills as well as improve my communication skills overall. This opportunity that was given to me will forever stick with me through my career as well as my personal life.