

Student Learning In The Real World

The Internship That Roared

Recent graduate Ashley Shirk entered college with intentions of becoming a zoologist. Last summer she learned about the field firsthand, working with wild animals more than four times her size.

The biology major enlisted in a summer internship program at the Siberian Tiger Conservation Association in Gambier, OH, a decision some of her friends and family initially thought risky to say the least.

“They said, ‘You crazy girl, you’re going to get eaten,’” she said, alluding to some of the bad press tigers have gotten in the live entertainment world. She argued, “I don’t want to play with them on stage.”

Indeed, what Shirk did could not be considered “play” by any means. She and other interns from around the country became close with the tigers at the

conservatory, performing health checks, taking their pulse, giving them water and food (pre-packaged in bulk rolls), brushing their teeth and even walking them on leashes.

Though the tigers never threatened Shirk, she was prepared in case they did. Each intern was expected to carry a spray bottle of vinegar water to deter the animals in case they became overzealous while in the interns' care. Interns also carried cans of compressed air in case they needed to protect themselves from the conservatory's lone male lion, which would have been less affected by the vinegar water.

A Well-Rounded Experience

Shirk learned about the tiger conservation internship program online and made her decision to sign up.

"There is just no way I would not have done it," she said.

"Students gain in many ways from internships," said Dr. Judith Stribling, internship coordinator for SU's Biology Department. "Some find the work to be exactly what they wanted, confirming their job aspirations and establishing valuable contacts. Others learn the valuable lesson that they really do not want to pursue this type of work in the future, without having made costly investments in time and commitments.

"Ashley is an example of the former student, and she also exemplified one other outstanding advantage of internships: They give students a

grounding for their academic work, showing them the utility of much of what they have learned in a real-life setting. They return to campus with renewed focus and connectedness with their class work."



In addition to earning three credits toward her education at SU, Shirk said she earned valuable experience that will help her with her ultimate goal: working at a conservatory and preparing animals for release into the wild. She credits SU, in part, with helping her set that goal.

"SU has made me more well-rounded," she said. "I got a taste of everything, and it helped me realize what I like."

The NASA-SU Connection

On a clear May day, seven Salisbury University students stood on the tarmac at NASA's Wallops Island Flight Facility and watched as their half-scale Patriot missile launched into the sky. Part of NASA's Small-scale Education Rocket Initiative (SERI), the program provides students with a hybrid-type Class M rocket motor, airframe, launch safety management and range facilities. Back in the physics laboratory of SU's Henson Science Hall, the students fit the motor into the rocket, analyze the trajectory given the thrust curve of the motor, and design, assemble and test a non-pyrotechnic recovery system, payload and supporting electronics. Throughout the process, the students report to NASA personnel on the preliminary and final designs, prepare the rocket for vibration testing at Wallops and undergo a stringent safety review prior to launch.

Students at SU are frequently exposed to experiences in such high-tech environments. Other cutting-edge opportunities include:

- Student Balloon Science and Engineering Flight Payload Program at Wallops Island Flight Facility
- Medical-Cardiac ICU Nursing at Peninsula Regional Medical Center
- Web Development and Design with the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Division of the U.S. Department of Energy
- Modeling Life Expectancies of Electronic Media at the National Archives and Records Administration



SU And The Community = Good Business

It is a fact that Salisbury University attracts bright, young people to the Lower Eastern Shore. A recent economic impact study indicated that along with these students, the University also contributes a whole lot more to the region—\$351 million more, to be exact.



That is the amount SU's Business, Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) found that the University contributes annually to the Lower Eastern Shore economy, generating the equivalent of 3,000 jobs.

In addition to the spending power of SU's students, faculty, employees and visitors, the University supports the economy by providing a constantly evolving roster of potential employees for regional businesses. From internships at Perdue Farms to student teaching in local schools to nursing practica at Peninsula Regional Medical Center, area businesses and services rely on SU students to get jobs done, and done right.



"Salisbury University is a major economic engine for our community," said Brad Bellacicco, executive director of the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce. "It lends stability in turbulent economic times to the region's economy. It is a superior source of skilled employees. Its mere presence is of benefit because of its operations and the faculty, staff and students it brings to the community."