

LESSONS LEARNED

‘Internships Are Two-Way Interviews’: What We Learned While Interning In Consulting



Companies often forget that an internship is a two-way interview. Gaining on-the-job experience is of course a priority, but so is gaining familiarity with a company’s culture.

As women, breaking into the male-dominated consulting industry is difficult, even after active recruitment efforts by many firms. This makes the internship experience all the more crucial for female interns, enabling them to gain insight into the culture and experience of women at a company.

This year, the summer intern class at Alvarez & Marsal’s Public Sector Services (A&M PSS) is the largest one in recent memory — and also is majority female. As interns ourselves who are a few weeks away from completing our summer internship, A&M PSS has already left a positive impact on the two of us and our four other fellow female interns.

A company driven by its values

From day one, we were impressed that A&M’s guiding principles and values (**Integrity, Quality, Objectivity, Fun, Personal Reward**, and – the most recent addition — **Inclusive Diversity**) truly perpetuate from all angles. This contributes to the renowned work the firm produces and has played a significant role in our experience and professional development this summer.

Objectivity

Objectivity has played a particularly major role in our experiences as female interns. Sincere access and exposure to multiple and diverse work streams, including direct contact to senior leadership, has fostered an incredible environment for our growth.

Erin Moore, a Summer Analyst and rising senior at Michigan State University, noted, “Having worked with both male and female interns, I don't see any gendered favoritism. I do recognize that there's only one female full-time A&M employee on the project I'm involved in, but that actually motivates me to work harder so that my voice is heard and my efforts are seen.”

On our end, as a Summer Analyst and a Summer Associate, we have felt throughout our time here that our voices and analysis are valued and taken seriously by our project teams. Feeling like an integral part of these teams has been natural. For any workplace, integration into the team is a large determinant of employee success and comfort. At A&M PSS, interns are integrated into their project teams from the get-go. Additionally, interns are matched with two mentors: a peer mentor and a senior mentor. All six female A&M interns have at least one female mentor or project supervisor, and they've served as fantastic resources to help guide and allow us to reflect on our experiences and performances.

Quality

This reflects the core value of Quality, which plays a dual role at A&M's Public Sector practice: the same focus and care that is demonstrated toward clients also exists in the company culture. While interns were welcomed onto project teams with open arms, numerous employees have also gone out of their way to ensure that our experiences as interns exceeded our own expectations.

Emma Garman, a Summer Analyst and rising senior at Duke University, described a “pointed and thoughtful” conversation with Managing Director Erin Covington. “I am excited to continue building relationships with such empowering women and leaders like Erin,” Garman said.

As a group, the amount of support and enthusiasm shown to us so far has been remarkable, as well as reflective of the level of purpose, diligence, and dedication that stands at the forefront of the company's client-facing work.

Fun and Personal Reward

We feel grateful for the opportunities we've had to be involved in meaningful, outcome-oriented work alongside a dedicated and compassionate team. “Like what you do and who you do it with” exemplifies the sense of excitement, passion, and fun that unifies A&M employees. Similarly, the

motivation to ignite change and fulfill better solutions seen through the value of Personal Reward has been an incredible initiative to be a part of.

Integrity and Inclusive Diversity

Integrity is evident through the diligent, attentive, and prudent approaches and perspectives that our colleagues bring to the table every day. It's been incredible to be a part of the genuine compassion and commitment that drives the day-to-day here.

During our time here, we've felt very fortunate to have noticed compassion and commitment through the growing push for Inclusive Diversity. It's clear that all members of the practice have taken and acted upon a vested interest in fostering an atmosphere where all are able to excel. We were welcomed onto the Education and Awareness taskforce, part of the practice's diversity and inclusion effort, and foresee a positive future ahead. As women at the onset of our careers, this has been not only reassuring, but also promising.

"My short time at A&M has offered me an empowering space to squash frivolous insecurities and grow confidence in my professional abilities," Garman noted.

A&M's internship recruitment program focuses significant efforts to find the best candidates interested in our work, including female interns and full-time consultants. PSS' talented and well-balanced 2020 summer intern class is proof that the practice's efforts were successful and worthwhile. While the firm has improved results on recruiting and retaining more women in recent years, this is only one step toward a recruiting pipeline that can bring racially, ethnically, socio-economically and academically diverse candidates into the applicant pool – and drive our future growth.

The barriers to entry for such candidates are often high in the consulting industry. But the firms that truly see the value of a diverse and inclusive workforce understand the necessity of breaking down these barriers. Bringing such diverse perspectives to A&M will not only create a more inclusive workplace culture, but it will also create a professional competitive advantage for A&M. We have already seen building momentum on diversity and inclusion initiatives at A&M PSS this summer. It is our hope that these initiatives continue to grow long after we leave.

We hope our positive experiences can become accessible to a more diverse pool of candidates that also wish to build Integrity, Quality, Objectivity, Fun, Personal Reward, and Inclusive Diversity as pillars in their own careers.