

GEMA Intern Internal Piece

Every year, college students scramble to apply for their dream summer internship: a position that will give them experience, excitement and opportunity for the future. If they play their cards right, the internship will lead to a full-time offer post-graduation.

For Quynh-Vu Dinh, the ultimate goal of an intern became a reality when she was recently hired full-time on the Exercise team as a state exercise officer. Last summer, Dinh had been an intern for the same team, but was finishing her Master's program at the time. When the state exercise officer position opened up, Dinh decided to interview because of her positive experiences as an intern.

"During my internship, I was exposed to a lot of things. I got to travel throughout the state, I got to see different exercises and tabletops and I got to meet a lot of people," she said, "That really helped with my networking: keeping in touch with people for different opportunities that would come up for me."

Last summer, a project handling monthly reports was a stand-out moment for Dinh. Tod Keys, exercise program director, who organizes the EOD-K9 bomb dogs, handles reports of the 45 K-9 teams in the field. Previously, these reports were done by hand, but when the information was put into electronic format, the program experienced major glitches. The program was then transferred to select outside groups for maintenance, but to no avail.

"The Georgia Tech team couldn't get it to work. IT couldn't get it to work. And Quynh just said 'I'm going to make it work,'" said Keys. Dinh did in fact complete the maintenance on the program after hours of work and kept the program up to date during her time as an intern, exhibiting her self-reliance and determination even further.

Keys explained that Dinh's work ethic was what made her stand out among other candidates for the state exercise officer position. "During her internship, she had a tremendous work ethic and attention to detail," he said, "She showed up on time, showed up early, and always asked if there was anything she could do. You never had to hunt her down and make sure she was done with something."

Dinh wasn't the only one who made a good impression. The other employees at GEMA/HS are what sparked her interest in returning for a permanent position. "My favorite aspect of my internship was how friendly everybody was to me," Dinh said, "Everyone is so welcoming, and it was just nice to pass by and have someone smile at you and see how you're doing every morning."

An upbeat attitude and dedication to perfection also got her noticed by employees outside of her department. "Through the intern process, people get to see who the intern really is," explained Keys, "When other folks saw us interviewing Quynh, they said, 'I hope y'all are going to hire her.'"

Making lasting impressions takes intentionality and drive. Dinh was given exposure to this professional environment and knew the impact she could make on her future during the few months in her intern role. As Keys explained, "interning gives the student an opportunity to make a name for themselves. They can make what they want out of their experience."

Dinh's new role could be more similar to her previous one than it would seem. She explained, "When I was an intern here, I didn't feel like I was here to do menial intern projects. I felt very included and

valued with meetings and exercises, so much so that it hasn't occurred to me in this new role that I'm here for more than just a summer."

Though Dinh had a quick start in emergency management, she soon realized that the passion she felt for this kind of work could last a lifetime. As a public health major at the University of Georgia, she found that emergency management resonated with her the most of all public health topics and was an area that often got overlooked. "Not many people know how important emergency management is. This is something I could totally see myself doing far into my future. I've always been big on volunteering, giving back and helping whenever something bad happens," Dinh said, "I thought this [current position with GEMA] was the best opportunity for me to do so."

While college summers and the time following graduation can be valuable for exploring and soul-searching, it can also be a crucial time to define one's dreams and prepare for a brighter future. Dinh recognized these moments as opportunities, and proved that flourishing isn't just about chance of circumstances or luck, but true effort and work ethic.