



## EVENTS AT ACADEME

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### High School Seniors Get a Taste of the “Real World” through Internships

DECATUR, Ga., May 30, 2012 // This spring, while many Georgia high school seniors were enjoying the beach—or maybe just the chance to sleep in—seniors at Academe of the Oaks, an independent high school grounded in Rudolf Steiner’s Waldorf curriculum and philosophy, were discovering how to set-up and style a photo shoot and how to organize a clinical research project. Last month, Academe’s entire senior class (of 14 students) completed two-week internships in a wide variety of fields—including scientific research, journalism, museum administration, and retail food service. The internships are just one aspect of Academe’s experiential-learning educational model—an approach that’s growing in popularity among both policy makers and employers.

Last month, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan unveiled the President’s vocational education plan, which included \$1 billion to increase partnerships among high schools, colleges and employers. But the employer-educator connection is nothing new. In many Western European nations, vocational, hands-on methods of teaching are common in high school and college programs, which typically provide experience along with classroom education. With just two of three college graduates working in their fields of study, the internship model is ideally suited to the post-recession economy.

Academe seniors will begin their college careers one step ahead when it comes to field experience.

In fact, a recent study of new college graduates notes that students who completed internships while in college felt more prepared to enter the workforce. The study, *Chasing the American Dream: Recent College Graduates and the Great Recession*, also noted that these students felt more prepared to enter the job market and made more money in their first jobs than students who had not participated in internship programs (\$30,000 versus \$26,000). Next fall, Academe seniors will begin their college careers one step ahead of their peers in terms of field experience, having completed internships at a marketing firm, a national magazine, a biochemistry lab, a veterinary hospital and other established business organizations.

“The ultimate benefit of a senior internship is an introduction to the real workforce: the complexities, the demands, interpersonal dynamics, and the rewards,” says Philip Verre, COO at Atlanta’s High Museum of Art. “It takes time to process everything, but an internship is a wonderful opportunity to dip one’s toe in the water.”

For many Academe students, the internships confirmed their fields of interest. Eliza worked in the biochemistry department at Georgia Tech. Though she spent time doing tedious computer work, analyzing the data, and putting it into a spreadsheet, the internship helped her determine “it was still the area of work I wanted to be in.” Chris performed data-entry and paperwork at iResearch Atlanta, but he also learned about the clinical research process. “I got to see some how any general business works as well, which I think will serve me well in the future.”

Rachel, who hopes to run her own small business one day, interned at Zen Tea. “I ended up brewing and serving a lot of tea, making sandwiches, and washing a ton of dishes,” she says. But she also learned a lot about business, especially customer service. “It was a good experience, the people I worked with were extraordinarily nice, and they offered me a job at the end, so now I work there!” Emily’s internship at the High Museum of Art reaffirmed her interest in the art museum world. “I got to work on everything from research to museum interpretation—those paragraphs on the wall next to paintings—to future public program ideas.”

Academe seniors also gained insight into the importance of day-to-day “soft skills” in the workplace. Carter, who interned at nationally recognized Paste Magazine, reports: “I really have had next to no work experience before this, and transitioning from high school to that was definitely a good learning experience and wake-up call.” Wells, who interned at Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, gained “several interesting views on how government-run business works and the issues involved.”

And Evy, who interned at Ormewood Animal Hospital, learned the importance of customer service and employee satisfaction: “It was a great experience not only in medicine and economics, but I also met some wonderful people who will continue to be my friends and connections in the future.”

But students aren’t alone in reaping rewards. As the High Museum’s Verre notes, Academe’s internship model is well suited to employers as well. “The benefits for the museum are an extra mind and set of hands, an outsider perspective and opinion of what is appealing to this particular demographic.” Connie Miller at Zen Tea says the internship provided “a great opportunity for us to learn how to train and direct new employees.” And Heather Beitz at iResearch appreciated intern Chris’s enthusiasm.

“A couple of times Chris really surprised me and said, ‘Heather, let’s get this done!’”

Founded in 2003, Academe of the Oaks offers a high school education without parallel in the Atlanta area. The rich, experiential Waldorf curriculum stimulates developing minds, and its close community of teachers is deeply committed to each student’s total growth. Academe of the Oaks offers a challenging academic program, laying a strong foundation for postsecondary work, while fostering students’ confidence to think independently and engaging their enthusiasm for learning. The SAIS-accredited high school, located just east of downtown Decatur, offers ninth through twelfth grades. For more information about the school, please contact Eva Handschin, school director, at (404) 405-2173, or visit [www.academeatlanta.org](http://www.academeatlanta.org).

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Study of recent college graduates:

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/college\\_bound/2012/05/survey\\_of\\_new\\_college\\_grads\\_gives\\_insight\\_into\\_job\\_prep.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/college_bound/2012/05/survey_of_new_college_grads_gives_insight_into_job_prep.html)

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