**Co-Op Paper**

This summer at HKS was the most fulfilling summer I’ve had working there so far. I’ve enjoyed my 5 years working for this company, and while it’s never been unenjoyable, I’ve really hit my stride as a valuable asset to my team and I’m right where I want to be. I’ve held many positions at HKS as they like to give their interns and student workers a broad training. I started with data entry which was far from the most fun but it was all I was really qualified to do back then. After I proved my work ethic and willingness to learn that first summer they extended my summer internship to a year round part time internship and started training me as a SharePoint admin.

This was the perfect segway for me into the world of IT. Sharepoint was a relatively easy platform to learn the basics of web development on as it did not require a background knowledge of coding. During that time I got a good handle learning HTML for the offhand pages that required more then the SharePoint create page template could do. I also learned how to be good employee and how to conduct myself in an office environment by watching and learning from a few excellent coworkers.

After that I was transitioned to the data team to learn SQL to create SSRS reports for various company needs. This was about the time I started taking computer science classes at UNT and I was over the moon about learning all this new coding material. Although I had loved learning HTML, after diving into SQL for work and C for school I was confidant that I had found a skill that I absolutely enjoyed everything about. My time on the data team was the point where I really started believing that I could not only do a job like this but be really good at it.

After I had been on the data team for about a year my boss came to me with an offer to be a full time ‘Student Worker’. I’d have to take less classes and extend my graduation date but my salary would double and I would get benefits. With this new role I’d be splitting my duties between continuing to write reports for the data team but also learning .net web development on our app dev team. App dev was difficult for me at first. When I was added to the team everyone had big deadlines and no desire or time to teach. I spend about a year trying to learn on the side, while still keeping up with my classes. Despite my efforts, I still wasn’t able to take on any tasks more complicated then changing colors or formatting text. This was an extremely frustrating time. Before this I had picked up every other new area easily and I was used to being praised as a quick learner. However despite the frustrations I kept at it.

At about this time we had a management change. As much as I had loved my old boss, who was like everyone’s dad, my new boss was spectacular. She started with a hiring push to expand the app dev team. She also made it a priority to focus on cross team training so no one was working in silo. Suddenly I had new people who were making the time to train and explain things to me. Instead of having to hunt for some small tasks to do across any of our apps I was assigned to focus on one app, ELEVATE. I started with getting bug fix task and through that I was able to get a much fuller understanding about how all pieces of the app worked. When I got stuck I wasn’t stuck for days anymore. I was able to have our new ELEVATE developer walk me through what was going on.

This last month I have been able to pick up some new functionality tasks along with the bug fixes. It’s been nothing major, but to me it’s been the world. The ability to look at a page in a web app people use all the time and say, “hey that’s all me”, is just the best feeling. Sadly our primary developer on ELEVATE was a contractor expired and he left. However, instead of backfilling him, I have taken on the responsibility of primary developer on ELEVATE. This is both exciting and a little scary but I feel up for the challenge. There are still other developers on the team willing to teach and I’m not on my own. I have all the tools to succeed and I’m excited to see what’s in store for me in the next year here at HKS.