

Summer Internship on Improving Educational Access in Nepal

The POV453 course, or the Shepherd Internship, is for 3-credits.

April 15

I plan to fly from Copenhagen to Kathmandu after my spring term abroad ends on May 22. Based on my online search, a one-way ticket from Denmark to Nepal costs around \$750, while the return ticket from Kathmandu to Dulles International Airport is approximately \$1,200. To account for potential price fluctuations until I receive funding, I have adjusted my estimate to \$2,100.

For local transportation, I will need to commute five days a week from my home in Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu, to Canopy Nepal's office on Thirbam Street, as well as make multiple trips to schools to meet with scholars. Public transportation is limited to buses, which are unreliable and time-consuming. Ride-sharing apps offering bike rides provide a more practical alternative, with fares averaging \$1.50 per trip. Based on this, I expect transportation costs to be around \$345.

Since this is an unpaid internship, Canopy Nepal does not provide any financial support. I will cover my own meals on workdays, budgeting \$50 per meal for five days a week over eight weeks, totaling \$2,000.

Short essays

For eight weeks, five days a week, and six hours each day, I will be completing an unpaid internship at Canopy Nepal, based in Kathmandu, Nepal. My primary role will be as a Field Volunteer and Facilitator for their CANSHIP scholarship project. I will mentor one or more scholarship recipients, offering academic support, career guidance, and emotional encouragement. Additionally, I will assist them in exploring technical and vocational training opportunities. A significant part of my responsibilities will involve gathering and analyzing student data to evaluate the effectiveness of the CANSHIP program, after which I will propose improvements to the coordinators at Canopy.

Summer is when the organization requires the most support to run its workshops. Beyond my primary duties, I will also contribute to their other initiatives, such as Learners' Hub, which organizes unique programs like Katha Bunaun, a workshop dedicated to fostering creative expression among young learners through writing and storytelling. In this role, I will lead interactive sessions designed to enhance students' personal and academic development.

This internship builds upon my previous experience at the National Child Helpline Center, where I conducted research and data collection on education accessibility in Nepal. That experience opened my eyes to the deep-rooted social, economic, and political barriers preventing children from exercising their right to education.

Founded in 2016, Canopy Nepal aims to expand access to equitable education, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable development for underprivileged children in Nepal. The organization works to bridge inequality and empower individuals to build a better future. Over the years, Canopy Nepal has earned multiple international accolades, including the Harvard Innovation Lab's 2024 Social Impact Fellowship Fund Award. It has also partnered with the Nepali government to implement curriculum reforms that better equip students for today's world.

My long-term professional goal is to advance digital learning by developing technology or software that provides students with high-quality resources to support their education. This internship will not only expand my understanding of the challenges faced in my country but also give me the opportunity to contribute to meaningful change in the lives of the children and girls supported by Canopy Nepal. Additionally, it will deepen my understanding of social mobility, a topic I explored in my POV 101 classes, and how its dynamics vary across different global contexts.

This is a copy of the letter that Canopy Nepal's Managing Director, Monal Bhattarai, wrote acknowledging that I will be interning with them this summer:

"To The Shepherd Program,

I am writing this Letter of Acknowledgement for Mr. Abhishek Pradhan with great enthusiasm to formally acknowledge that Mr. Pradhan will be interning with Canopy Nepal this summer as a Field Volunteer/Facilitator for our key programs for a period of eight weeks. During his internship, Mr. Pradhan will be actively involved in field visits and building a rapport with our students in different public schools in Kathmandu for our CANSHIP program, and he will also be involved in supporting program facilitation for our Katha Bunaun session. Mr. Pradhan will be directly contributing to our initiatives through direct engagement with our students and the team. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with The Shepherd Program and look forward to Mr.

Pradhan joining us for the summer. If you require any further details regarding our work or Mr. Pradhan's role and responsibilities or have any other queries related to the internship, please feel free to reach out to me.

Thank you."

Shepherd internship Questionnaire

Last fall, during my freshman year, I took two courses that have prepared me well for this internship.

One was WRIT 100, where I strengthened my writing skills, learned to express my thoughts more clearly in essays, conducted in-depth research using credible sources, and practiced

critical analysis of various texts. Writing is an essential skill for every child, helping them articulate their ideas as they grow. The experience I gained in this course will be valuable in leading creative writing workshops and mentoring students.

The second course, POV 197, was designed for Bonner Scholars and focused on personal autonomy, moral responsibility, and the impact of doing good in society. It emphasized the importance of respecting the individuality of the people we serve. The insights I gained from this class have shaped how I engage with organizations, both in Lexington and beyond. These lessons will help me interact with students and teachers in a way that is both respectful and meaningful.

My journey to understanding Nepal's education system began in 2023 when I worked as a research intern at Child Workers in Nepal and their National Child Helpline Center. While collecting data on educational accessibility, I became aware of the social, economic, and political challenges many students—especially those in government schools—face. Low enrollment in higher grades, lack of awareness about basic rights, and the hidden costs of education are pressing issues that need attention.

However, my role in that internship was limited to data collection, research, and some counseling for rescued children. Moving forward, I want to take a more active role in bridging the gap between aspiration and opportunity for low-income Nepali students who lack access to education and mentorship. This internship will not only give me hands-on experience in tackling these challenges but also help me understand the broader social mobility barriers that shape access to education. In the long run, I hope to use technology to expand digital learning opportunities for students, and this experience will be a crucial step in shaping my approach to making quality education more accessible.

The Shepherd Internship is a 3-credit course (POV 453) that will count toward my total credits, but its value goes beyond academics. It will deepen my understanding of key concepts from my POV 101 class, such as capabilities and freedoms, human rights to basic necessities, and justice. Experiencing these issues firsthand in Nepal—a developing country with challenges different from those in the U.S.—will give me a broader, global perspective on these topics.

To document my experience, I plan to take detailed notes on my work and carefully track my observations. This will help me answer the required assignment questions and provide valuable insights when presenting at the Shepherd Internship poster session. I see these sessions as an

important opportunity to share the work we did over the summer and contribute to a larger conversation on poverty and social impact.

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After my Spring Term Abroad class ends on May 22, I will fly directly from Copenhagen, Denmark, to Kathmandu, Nepal. I plan to return to Virginia in mid-to-late August, about 2–3 weeks after my internship ends. Since I will be in my hometown, I will stay with my parents and commute to work from their home.

I want to be an International Student Orientation leader because I see it as a great opportunity to connect with the incoming international freshman class. I am still close with many of the ISO leaders who helped during my orientation, and I always say hi when I see them around campus. I even visit their apartments if I want to talk or need help with anything. I am genuinely grateful for my orientation leaders, who organized so many events for us and have been an invaluable resource for fellow international students like myself. I would love the chance to provide the same kind of support to new freshmen during International Orientation Week.

As an international student at Washington and Lee University (W&L), I have firsthand experience navigating the unique challenges of adjusting to a new cultural and academic environment. This journey has given me empathy and insight into the support new international students need during their transition.

I have had countless experiences working in teams to organize events for large groups of people. If you were to ask my friends, they would say I have a good eye for finding creative solutions to problems and managing event logistics. At W&L, I have helped organize South Asian festivals like Diwali, where we performed Bollywood dances and coordinated food for hundreds of guests at the Center for Global Learning. Additionally, as a member of the Student

Association for International Learning (SAIL), I have gotten to learn about cultural exchange and inclusivity on campus. These experiences have strengthened my ability to foster a welcoming environment for students from various backgrounds.

My active involvement with the Center for International Education (CIE) has deepened my understanding of the resources available to international students. Collaborating with CIE staff has enhanced my ability to guide peers in utilizing these services effectively. Likewise, I have used many of W&L's resources—from the Writing Center to the CPD—making me knowledgeable enough to guide international students who often haven't had the chance to tour campus before arriving.

By leveraging my experiences and the knowledge gained from these programs, I am well-prepared to collaborate with fellow leaders to assist new students in their transition to life at W&L.