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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Presented by Historian, Romina Velasco

SUMMER IN PRACTICE: STORIES FROM OUR INTERNSHIPS

IF YOU WANT A STORY, THIS IS IT



Every summer tells a different story.

This year, Beta Alpha Psi Xi Eta members stepped into accounting firms across Northeast Florida and beyond, each beginning their internships with different backgrounds, expectations, and experiences. Some were entering their very first accounting role, while others were returning to familiar teams or taking the next step toward a full-time career.

As the summer came to a close, our board gathered to look ahead—to a new semester, new opportunities, and the experiences our members would carry forward. At our summer board retreat, Xi Eta's leadership paused to reflect on what was ahead, while our members' own summer internship experiences were coming into focus.

No two internships looked exactly alike, but one theme emerged: *growth*. It showed up in learning new systems, taking on unfamiliar responsibilities, contributing to real client work, and figuring out when to ask for help. It also showed up in the less tangible parts of the experience—building meaningful relationships, communicating with teammates, embracing challenges, and gaining confidence in professional environments.

The reflections that follow are more than summaries of a summer internship. Together, they tell the story of students becoming professionals—one experience, one conversation, and one lesson at a time.

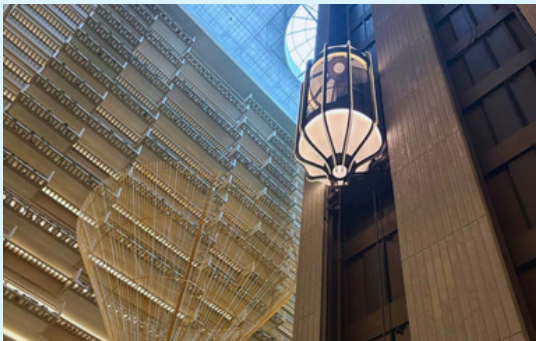
THE FIRST CANVAS

Every story starts somewhere.

For some, it begins with a first day spent learning new systems and meeting unfamiliar faces. For others, it begins with a question they are nervous to ask, a task they have never done before, or a realization that they are more capable than they thought.

For *Emily Hall*, her summer began in KPMG's Jacksonville office, where she joined the Audit practice as an intern. Her work gave her a glimpse into the technical side of the profession—walkthrough documentation, design and implementation testing, and the process of understanding how a client's internal controls operate. But as she reflects on her summer, it isn't the technical work that stands out most.

It's the people.



"Beyond the technical experience, the biggest thing I took away was the importance of collaboration." Emily quickly discovered that an internship is about more than learning how to complete a task. It is also about learning when to ask questions, how to communicate, and how to learn from the people around you. Her team was willing to explain not only how something was done, but *why* it mattered. That distinction made the unfamiliar feel approachable—and gave Emily the space to grow throughout the summer.

And perhaps that is what makes an internship memorable: not simply the work you were trusted to do, but the *people who make you feel valued along the way*.

The KPMG Jacksonville office was professional, welcoming, and genuinely supportive, and Emily always felt like a valued member of the team. By the end of the summer, she had gained more than experience in audit. She had gained a clearer understanding of the kind of environment in which she could see herself building a career.

It is a fitting place to begin our summer exhibit: with a reminder that sometimes, the first thing an internship teaches you isn't about the work at all.

It's about the people who make you want to keep learning.



LEARNING BY DOING

If Emily's summer reminds us how much the people around you can shape an internship, *Sarah Aker's* story begins with something just as familiar to many students: *not knowing what to expect.*

For Sarah, her internship at Forvis Mazars was her first accounting experience. She walked into the summer with an open mind and, as she puts it, "was not sure what to expect."

What followed was a summer of learning by doing.

Working primarily with Employee Benefit Plans, Sarah found herself navigating work she had not encountered much in the classroom. Her days included planning papers, building trial balances, selecting samples, testing contributions, loans and distributions, and preparing closing workpapers.

It was a reminder that there is only so much a classroom can prepare you for. Sometimes, the best way to learn is to be handed something unfamiliar and figure it out—with a team beside you.

And Sarah had exactly that.

She describes the staff at Forvis Mazars as kind, patient, and genuinely interested in helping the interns learn. Questions were welcomed, and the people around her were willing to take the time to explain things. Even outside of the work itself, Sarah found a sense of community among the interns, who quickly became a close group.

That combination—being challenged by unfamiliar work while surrounded by people willing to help—deepened Sarah's confidence to keep learning.

By the end of the summer, Sarah wasn't just able to say that she had completed her first accounting internship. She could look back and recognize how much she had learned along the way.



Her experience offers another glimpse into what these summers can become: *an opportunity to learn in real time, one question and one new task at a time.*

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

By the time *Jahari Bynoe* began his internship at RSM, he already had an idea of what it meant to show up professionally. Serving as Treasurer for Xi Eta had given him a foundation.

But an internship has a way of testing what you think you know.



At RSM, Jahari found himself thinking beyond the idea of simply being a “number puncher.” One of his biggest takeaways from the summer was the importance of aspiring to become a long-term advisor—someone who can build relationships, communicate effectively, and understand the people behind the numbers.

That shift in perspective came with a challenge: *stepping outside of his comfort zone.*

Working alongside professionals every day required Jahari to communicate more frequently and more confidently. He also had to navigate the many software programs and systems that come with working at a professional firm—tools that, at times, made him feel like he was “missing the mark.”



But instead of letting that uncertainty stop him, Jahari learned how to work through it.

Ask the right questions.
Take good notes.
Keep going.



Those simple habits helped him find his footing, turning moments of uncertainty into opportunities to grow. And throughout that process, Jahari found a team that was willing to invest in him. He describes his experience at RSM as “incredibly growth-stimulating,” crediting the kindness and patience of the people around him for helping him succeed.

His summer offered a lesson that extends beyond accounting: growth rarely happens when everything feels comfortable. Sometimes, it happens when you are *given something unfamiliar, asked to speak up, and trusted to figure it out.*

For Jahari, stepping outside his comfort zone didn’t just make him a better intern. It began shaping the kind of *professional—and advisor—he hopes to become.*



A WORLD OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Some internships teach you how to navigate a new role. *Others show you just how much bigger that role can become.*

For *Emily Lowe*, her summer at EY began with an introduction to a world she had not yet experienced: Technology Risk. As part of EY's FSO Technology Risk service line, she gained her first glimpse into both a new area of the profession and life at a Big Four firm.

But much like Emily Hall from KPMG, she found that the most memorable part of the experience wasn't necessarily the work itself. It was the people.

Her team created an environment where questions were welcomed, guidance was readily offered, and learning felt encouraged rather than intimidating. That mentorship gave Emily the confidence to grow—not only in her understanding of the work, but in her excitement about building a career in public accounting.

Then, her internship took her beyond the walls of her home office.

Traveling to different EY offices and client locations introduced Emily to new environments and professionals from across the firm. Each new place became another opportunity to learn, connect, and understand the culture of a company much larger than the team she worked with every day.



In a way, the experience expanded her world twice: first through the work she was learning, and then through the people and places that came with it.

By the end of the summer, Emily had strengthened her confidence, expanded her network, and deepened her excitement about a future in public accounting. What began as an introduction to Technology Risk became something much broader—a chance to explore a profession, build relationships, and discover how much can happen when you step beyond what is familiar.

Sometimes an internship gives you a new skill.

Sometimes, it gives you a larger view of what is possible.

THE LITTLE THINGS

Not every lesson from an internship comes from a client meeting or a new software program. Sometimes, it comes from a morning GIF. Or a pizookie shared with eight other interns.

Or three frustrating hours spent trying to figure out why an Excel adjustment will not submit.

For *Athena Vu*, her summer at Macquarie Group was filled with all of it.



There was plenty of Excel, plenty of FIFA matches on the TV, and plenty of work that pushed her to apply what she had learned in the classroom to situations she had never encountered before. But woven between the work were the little moments that made the internship feel like more than just an internship.



And somewhere between those moments, Athena learned one of the most important lessons of her summer: *it is okay to ask questions.*

She learned this lesson the hard way.

One afternoon, Athena spent three hours pulling data and trying to submit adjustments, only to keep running into an error with one column of the adjustment journal. After trying multiple times, she finally asked her buddy for help.

The problem?

She had simply entered the wrong period code.

What had taken Athena three hours took someone else about a minute to fix.

It would have been easy to look back on that moment as a mistake. Instead, she came away with something much more valuable: the confidence to ask before a small problem becomes a big one.

“Asking questions does not show a lack of ability. Instead, it shows a willingness to learn, improve, and complete the work correctly.”

That lesson became part of how Athena approached the rest of her summer. Each question gave her a better understanding of the work, made her more efficient, and helped her build the knowledge to eventually handle similar tasks on her own.



And perhaps the reason she felt comfortable asking in the first place was the people around her.

Her team at Macquarie made room for questions—even the small ones—and created an environment where she didn't feel like she needed to have every answer immediately.

By the end of the summer, Athena had gained more than experience with Excel or the technical skills of her role. She gained something that will follow her long after the internship ends: the confidence to say, “I don't know yet—but I can learn, improve, and eventually figure it out on my own.”

And when she looks back on her summer, she won't only remember the work.



She'll remember the GIFs.

The FIFA matches.

The pizookie.

The people.



Because in the end, it was *the little things* that made the experience one to remember.

THE EXHIBIT CONTINUES

Standing back and looking at these five stories together, the differences begin to matter less than the thread connecting them.

Different firms. Different roles. Different challenges. Different people. Yet none of these students walked away as the same person who walked in.

They asked questions. They learned unfamiliar things. They stepped outside their comfort zones. They built relationships, gained confidence, and became more independent in their work. They left with new skills, new perspectives, and a stronger sense of the professionals they are becoming as they enter the public accounting profession.

As I read through these reflections, I found myself thinking about my own internship this summer. I recognized the same process in my own experience: the questions I asked at the beginning, the things that felt unfamiliar, and the moments when something that once required guidance became something I could navigate on my own.

For much of the summer, I found myself trying to prove that I belonged in the room. But experience has a way of changing that. You learn as you go. You become more comfortable with what you don't know. And eventually, you realize that becoming a stronger professional was never about knowing everything from the start.

It was about being willing to learn.



Xi Eta members Bella Harris, Vaishnav Nair, and I spending the summer interning together at JEA



At first, you ask because you don't know. Then you gain exposure. The next time something similar happens, you recognize it. Eventually, you may not need to ask anymore—not because you suddenly know everything, but because you've learned how to navigate it yourself.

Those moments may seem small, but they add up. They are where experience becomes knowledge, where knowledge becomes confidence, and *where the catalyst for professional growth takes shape.*

And perhaps that is what summer in practice really gives us: not all the answers, but the experience to **keep finding them.**

FALL 2026 AT A GLANCE ✧

As we close out the summer and look toward a new semester, we want to thank the faculty, sponsors, alumni, and partners who continue to make these experiences possible for our members.



Your support gives students opportunities to meet professionals, explore careers, build relationships, and put what they learn into practice.

As we look ahead to Fall 2026, we're excited to continue creating opportunities for our members to learn, connect, and grow together. Here are a few of the major events we have in store for the semester:

- Alumni Social: Mellow Mushroom (9734 Deer Lake Ct #1, 32246) — September 25th 2026 from 6PM-9PM
- Fall Networking Event: UNF Student Union, Ballrooms ABC — October 23rd, 2026 from 6PM-8PM
- Community Service Event: Eartha's Farm, Northside Jacksonville — October 24th, 2026

{In partnership with KPMG}

We look forward to another semester of learning, connection, and growth together. As we continue this journey, we hope you'll join us and experience *the Xi Eta exhibit with us*.

Sincerely, Historian
— Romina Velasco

