



Article

Intern spotlight: Paige Harrington on keeping an open mind, harnessing Lean tools in your health & safety internship

Having an internship on your resume can give you an edge in the job market, but more importantly, it's an opportunity to get your hands dirty in new areas. This can help you determine what you're interested in and sometimes more importantly, what you're not interested in, before entering the workforce. In this Intern Spotlight, Paige Harrington, who just completed the summer as an Intern in our Rochester office, shares her experience and discusses the nuances of health & safety at an engineering firm as well as the importance of keeping an open mind and saying "yes" to new things.

Name: Paige Harrington

School: Rochester Institute of Technology

Major(s)/Year of graduation: Received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Earth Science from Fitchburg State University in 2018; Pursuing a Master of Science in Environmental Health & Safety Management from the Rochester Institute of Technology, expected to graduate in December 2019.

Haley & Aldrich office: Rochester, New York

What inspired you to get into Health & Safety at an engineering firm?

I enjoy health & safety for an engineering firm because it's unique in that it encompasses a variety of topics that I've learned in school so far. My program is mainly designed around health & safety in manufacturing, which can be somewhat predictable. For engineering firms, there are multiple components that you have to deal with, and I like that. You're not just dealing with a single facility – you not only have to implement your own health & safety practices, you also have to incorporate the client's safety processes and culture.

I also feel as though I can make a positive difference to the environment by being a part of an engineering firm like Haley & Aldrich because of the type of consulting we undertake. By ensuring that our clients are in compliance or by advocating for alternative recommendations, we're promoting safety while simultaneously protecting the environment.

What was your favorite experience as an intern at Haley & Aldrich?

This probably sounds cliché, but every day was my favorite because I was constantly given new challenges and every day was a learning opportunity. One example is when I was tasked with doing a change on a permit. I didn't know much about permitting, so it was cool to learn more about it. At school, you learn about permits, but don't actually work on them so it's great to be able to get the hands-on experience.

Bagel Thursday was also a big plus here at the Rochester office.

What is a new valuable skill or tool that you developed as intern that you'll use in your career moving forward?

Throughout my time here I've learned a lot about Lean, Microsoft Excel, and ArcMap and I look forward to utilizing those skills moving forward. As an example, I'll be [working on a 5S](#) for our library in the Rochester office which will double as an opportunity to pursue my Lean White Belt through Haley & Aldrich's internal Lean Journey Pathway. Right now, it's just five bookshelves of resources and you can't tell where anything is. I'm picking this project up where my fellow office staff left off – they have completed the sorting, now it's up to me to bring it across the finish line! I learned about 5S through shadowing a 5S audit in our field lab and helping with the associated operations and maintenance plans, which led me to believe it would be a great tool to improve the library.

What advice would you give to someone looking for an internship at an engineering firm?

Be open minded and flexible. When I went out in the field to conduct wetland delineation work, the first day was nice and sunny, but the second day it rained all day and it made me question if this was for me. Ultimately, I'm glad I had the experience. It's better to say "yes" and learn that you don't like something, than say "no" before trying it.

What are you most looking forward to this school year?

I'm looking forward to my graduate project which will involve creating a lesson plan about the [importance of A3s](#), which is something I learned at Haley & Aldrich. I've learned about a couple of projects where the clients really valued information presented in an A3 format. I'm hoping by sharing this tool with students that it will open some doors on how to approach challenges and present information. At school, we've had plan-do-check-adjust (PDCA) drilled into us and we've learned about other Lean tools such as Fishbone and Root Cause Analysis, but there's so many other Lean tools and principles that would benefit our learning at school.

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