

UWO students benefit from real-world experiences with EAA

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Before the "World's Greatest Aviation Celebration" kicks off in Oshkosh at the end of July, there's lots of work to be done at the Experimental Aircraft Association.

Lucky for EAA, there's a slew of able and educated students looking for internships and work literally in their backyard.

This year, as the aviation celebration known around the world as "Oshkosh" AirVenture nears, more than 20 students show up daily to work in high-impact internships and jobs. From internships in marketing, communications, public relations and IT to on-the-front-line jobs on the grounds and in maintenance functions, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students are helping making it happen.

"Throughout the years, UW Oshkosh has been a primary source for interns and summer staff for EAA, and we've even had numerous volunteers from the UWO student body participate in EAA activities and projects," said Janine Diana, EAA's vice president of human resources. "We enjoy working with these students because they can use their skills as part of a fun and effective workplace while gaining valuable experience. That's especially true as we prepare for the annual AirVenture fly-in, a world-famous event that has unique demands and rewards for the EAA staff."

AirVenture kicks off July 29 and runs through Aug. 4. Educational opportunities, though, are built into the prep and execution stage of an event that attracts so many people from throughout the world. The Oshkosh Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates the extravaganza brings more than a half million people to town.

"If you are at all interested in event planning, this is the mecca in Wisconsin," said Neal Corby, a UW Oshkosh senior studying journalism and public relations who is working as part of the events team at EAA. "This is really a real-world experience. You are thrown into the mix of AirVenture."

Corby said he's so thankful for the opportunity to work among some of the best in the industry to make sure the event goes off without a hitch.

"There are a lot of busy days where you deal with a lot of stuff you'll be doing once you work full-time in the field," he said. "It makes it very easy to get excited about the field you hope to work in."

Mia Johnson, also a senior studying journalism and public relations at UW Oshkosh, shares in Corby's excitement in having an internship that so closely relates to what she'd like to do in her future. Johnson's role via her internship at EAA includes monitoring media coverage, creating and managing media contact lists and writing and distributing press releases.

"I like just taking it all in because this is really what I want to do someday," Johnson said.

Johnson said internships are crucial for students who are graduating from college and looking for their first job.

"It's so competitive out there," she said.

Gary Flick, a senior studying journalism with an emphasis in editing and writing, is also among the communicators at EAA. He spends his days working on publications for EAA. He's also grateful for his internship experience with EAA and the portfolio he knows he'll build through the opportunity.

"I really like the fact that I was tossed into the role, given the keys and told to do the job," said Flick, who writes two to three stories each day.

Beyond communication

Brianna Hamilton, a senior studying marketing at UW Oshkosh, works with the EAA team on sponsorships and said she feels she's learning a lot about being a professional.

"I've enjoyed being part of some of the leadership meetings. It really shows how people actually work and helps me understand the beyond-the-classroom definition of things," she said.

Hamilton, like her peers with internship opportunities, said she appreciates just watching everything come together. She knows the lessons are invaluable.

Marquise Jones, a senior studying information systems at UW Oshkosh, agrees. He works with the IT team at EAA to, among other things, make sure people have access to the Internet when and where they need it during AirVenture. Jones, who is working this summer for the second time as an EAA intern, said the opportunity has even helped shape what he might like to do in his future.

"I want to go into the networking side, so this helps me so I can go into my field with great experience," he said. "I'll be able to go into a situation and get how IT works. This business has been around longer than I've been alive so it seems they know how to get it all done."

Additionally on the EAA grounds, there is every-day work that needs to be done. Grass needs to be mowed, tents need to be built, walking paths need to be cleared. Enter, a grounds and maintenance crew, in part made up of UW Oshkosh student athletes. The crew members said they work diligently pre-AirVenture to make sure everything looks great and then are at-the-ready during the major event as needed like in situations where water or flood control is required. While the jobs are very labor intensive and hands-on, the students recognize the value in the connections they are making as well as in working with a team, they said.

Learn more:

- [Career Services at UW Oshkosh](#)
- [EAA](#)