

Intro: You are on with career talks presented by the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech a regular podcast featuring students, alumni, and friends of the school offering advice to help you succeed in your career endeavors.

Q: So welcome to career talks a podcast service of the Academic Services Office of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech. We're talking with Evan Long an International Affairs rising senior at the Nunn School. Can you introduce yourself, Evan.

A: Yeah, my name's Evan Long I am about start my fourth year in Georgia Tech, fourth and final year graduating next May. I'm from Lilburn, GA which it is in Gwinnett County about thirty-five minutes on the highway from here. And both of my parents came to Georgia Tech, big tech family and I am very proud to be in the Ivan Allen College in the Sam Nunn School.

Q: So we are talking about your experience as a Legislative Director at Searles Consulting and intern in the office of Congressman Rob Woodall in D.C. What motivated you to apply to both positions?

A: I'll start with Rob Woodall's office. Congressman Woodall he represents the seventh district, which is Gwinnett County and most of Forsyth County. And I live in Gwinnett County so I'm a constituent for Rob Woodall. I've always liked him a lot I've always following his career. He's one of those very low key congressman he's never on the news doesn't really do anything controversial in anyway but he's a he's a hard worker. So I've always liked him and I want to have a D.C. experience and I applied for his office. It was actually I called his Chief of Staff, I found the number and we talked on the phone a little bit. I didn't have to have an interview, like I was offered a position after that. So it was exciting time. I really wanted to do it mainly because I wanted to be in Washington D.C. A lot of careers and my friends and everything are in Washington D.C. It's where everyone goes and I was very behind the curve in terms of applying for internships and for any a job in the Capitol Hill, those are a pretty easy to get last minute. I was planning on taking classes over the summer then I changed last minute and it ended up working really well for me. It was a paid internship as well which is pretty hard to find especially in anything Liberal Arts, people don't like paying us sometimes. But it is paid internship, even if there aren't paid internships, Georgia Tech offer stipends. I didn't apply for one of those because I was paid but looking back I probably should have, it doubled the money. I really wanted to work in a congressional office and see how the system works. It's a huge system, four hundred thirty-five Representatives one hundred Senators and they're all working in five buildings right by the Capitol. So being a cognate system and seeing how it all worked was really really awesome and also the exposure you give the Congress and the staff and the exposure you get to Washington D.C. as a whole. Like do I want to live here one day, that was really really valuable. The consulting group, it's called Searles Consulting and it's really a lobbying firm, a one person lobbying. Her name is Christina Tai, she's a Georgia Tech alumna and she has her own lobbying firm in the state capital in city of Atlanta. So just all state politics she does and I got connected with her through the office of Government Relations at Georgia Tech. I originally interned at the state capitol last spring for a program we have called the Georgia Legislative Internship Program and that's where about eight or nine Tech students who intern at the state

capitol with a committee chairmanship. so I was with a committee chairmanship or leadership position so I interned in the in the majority whip office in the state Senate and I have friends who are like in the Judiciary Committee or the Aging Committee or something like that. My first exposure the state capitol at that time and my second exposure was on the other side of things. I chose a lobbying group to work for because I wanted to see how the other half lives, you could say, specifically, the process of lobbying on a state level because it's so different than the federal level. And I saw the federal level little bit lobbyist interoffice but I got to be hands on with Christine. It was because she's solely employed by herself, it was just me and her together and that was a blast being kind of working in tandem I had a lot of responsibility and we went back and forth. We are still in contact allowed, we plan things out together I helped her this week with some online documents. But that was a super awesome opportunity to do because I got to not just be an intern and a little guy coming in, I actually had a real role of a substantial title and with that has an awesome responsibility.

Q: That's awesome, I think you had two wonderful experiences. I think you answered part of the next question about what was most rewarding about your internship and then as a Legislative Director?

A: So for the D.C. internship when I worked on the Hill the most rewarding was living in Washington D.C. At first it was a little irritating being an intern because you don't necessarily have any huge responsibility. You're there to make sure you know everything's running the office is going well and you have every now and then our task is kind of interesting in a little more intensive but overall it's not much. So what was really most rewarding was simply being in D.C., being around the city, and feeling out like I do want to have a career one day, which is so important. I think if you want to live a different city to live there a little bit before you decide to live there where ever and college is the only time you can get to test out a region and I got to have a great time and after work like having dinner with friends or my coworkers the whole work environment. I learned a lot about that working in that job and it was it was it also very rewarding internship in itself. Just simply being in the office and being a part of something that was you know just the U.S. Congress being a part of it looked at as a huge deal it's the oldest legislative body, one of the oldest in the world. Being a part of that system was really exciting especially we were there during the presidential conventions over the summer so I got to hear all about presidential politics from a lot of people who were very biased one way or the other and were very informed one way or the other too, that was nice. At the state capitol the most rewarding, mostly was a responsibility I had because I found someone who worked by herself, I was working with a big firm I wasn't working with a big organization that had lots of different people working for them. I work for one person and she got to give me a lot of responsibility and I got to know her a lot know her and her connections to the Capitol. So that was much more rewarding than just being one of the fleet of interns of like I was the previous time and I wasn't I was really someone that was replaceable I was it in a way. And I was only doing part time but even then I still felt very valuable and I did some real work I thought that was really fun to really get to know. And also at the State Capitol but this isn't the fact the case of D.C. because you see so big so many people are there from all across the world but and the State Capitol everyone there is from all across the state of Georgia and it's not that many people. The

States Senate and it's only fifty six seats and the House is one hundred eighty-two, I believe. So you get to really know the people you work with and I got to genuinely become friends with different lobbyist and even some elected officials and a lot of their staff too just exposure to them that was really rewarding those relationships that you build, especially during campaign season. You never know who's going to be something bigger later on the path that it's nice to meet people and to think this person you would never know ten years from now what they're going to do. It was a very exciting experience.

Q: Yeah it sounds like it. So I think you touched on it but how are the experiences similar and different.

A: Yeah, so I like I mentioned before, in D.C. you're kind of a cog in the machine. You have a real responsibility and I had friends who worked at Think Tanks and stuff like that and they were doing some crazy stuff. They were doing lots of research and I wasn't doing the research intensive but I was doing a lot of constituent work which I was surprised about and I didn't really do any constituent work for a lobbying firm because I have no constituents. But D.C. constituent work was fun a lot of it's you're the face the office, face the congressman. So you can't speak for him but they are asking a lot of questions and you have to kind of learn how to dodge to deflect and move things around. And not not say something like here's my very, you know political opinion that he may be sure by him, if I say it you'll believe me if so you'll be careful not to do anything like that. And that was cool because you want a lot of communication but at the State Capitol obviously, that was not the case, I was assisting my boss and sitting in for meetings kind of strategizing planning out, doing a lot of news gathering or news gathering is a fancy word for gossip, asking questions, form relationships and kind of being present, being visible so people see you and when they think, oh I need to have this, that person might help so they if you're around the see you until they can to trust you and form relationships. It's very different kinds of things like that and that's also another thing with with any D.C. versus a local internship, the more local you get the more, more friendly you're going to get I said this before but the friendlier to get. You get to know your coworkers a lot better, the smaller your space is and the State Capitol it's very small so you got to know people really well. D.C. though there just a lot of people you meet someone new every day but it's kind of when you deciding one or the other. It is important to think how you interact people and I'm very extraverted and I can manage both ways very well, meeting new people every day and also kind of having a smaller environment. I should have expected that but I didn't wasn't really expecting that in DC, that it would be that level of detachment because it's just so huge. My floor probably had as many staff working in that floor as State Capitol had in total even the governor's office, just because they're about ten per office and about ten offices per floor and that's maybe there's a lot more stuff in the State House but it's a lot of people.

Yes, I think you made a lot of connections and learned a lot.

And also, it's also about the issues you learn. Where you are, in America is going to kind of dictate how you hear about it. You don't hear about national issues at all at the State Capitol. it was very unusual no one barely ever talked about the election, people didn't talk about Trump

people didn't talk about Clinton, they did talk about more local issues. That was interesting that it was very divided terms of the issues and the problems they have. That D.C. is a completely different conversation than there was in State Capitols. And I thought it was all politics but it's very divided so it's also what you can handle what your interests and you've got to decide what level and you're not going to hear much about the other level from the one you're at.

Q: that's very insightful. How did Georgia Tech or the Nunn School prepare you for both roles?

A: Well Georgia Tech got me the first internship in the State Capitol, it was the Georgia Legislative Internship Program and that was a Georgia Tech program and through that qualified me and connected me with the current lobbying internship I had this past semester. And it got me directly to that and the Capitol. The Capitol was on my own, I took my own initiative to do that but I could think some of that was my training. I took a class in the Sam Nunn School, it was all about group presentations and it was a global issues and leadership class. And the class of half of us and half French students and that was super super useful especially for last semester internship. The people skills and the organizational skills even the presentation skills you learn in that like, the whole class was emphasizing condensing you know this whole policy brief into this little itty bitty conversation to have someone. That has got me more trained and used my words wisely and quickly and conveying information as clearly as possible to as wide an audience as possible. And that was really useful especially if you're in your work for eleven hours a day on your frantically running around trying to give information, that class which really useful. And I mean even the classes I've taken it's a pre-law class and public policy classes that simply like the knowledge I learned them in that analyzing skills I learned those are super useful, and simply understand exactly what was going on. even if it wasn't tasked with writing something out just it's useful to know what's going on so following the news and reading articles or research articles, the background I had that prepared me more than anything.

Q: Do you have any advice for students that are interested in applying?

A: If you want to work in lobbying which there were a lot of Tech people do lobbying especially sometimes lobbyists like a person with the specific background to come and be a witness or a valid stance in the area. Because you can talk about whatever you want about the technology policy but if you mention political science the person talking to, is like but you really an expert. So there are people there who have background in certain areas, like you you're very much needed to help to convince policymakers to move in a certain direction. And that's my advice is that public work is excellent, like doing anything the political sphere and matter what side you're on is awesome opportunity and I encourage people to go for it. And also don't think of lobbying as this kind of evil, horrible thing that you may see a lot in the news or any politician running for something. They always we'll get the special interest but that's more of a talking point than a reality because what is special interest? Special interest is like a hospital or organization like devoted to like helping death patients get the next medical procedure so these special interests oftentimes are really what's going to end up saving a lot of people's lives and making everyone's lives better. So the idea of lobbying is something like oh, corporate greed that's not really true because even the big corporate companies a lot of them they know what

they're doing, they're not there to change the system make them in charge of America they're there to work out reasonable things are usually pro-business. A lot of people in America are very pro-business so you'll find that the idea of special interest of the evil lobbyists, that's a myth and that's something that is created kind of for campaigns. In reality a lot of people who are lobbying sometimes or even volunteers, you know you, your neighbors and they were not the Capitol is part of the Parent Teacher Association like fighting for education. So there's a lot of facets to it and I'd discouraging anyone from looking at it unfavorably until you actually meet people who do it and realize, oh these people are doing this to literally save children's lives or something along those lines. And that's that's that's very valuable. And also if you want any influence at all over policy, if you're angry or something go for it. If you like to complain a lot, call your representative, call your senator, call whoever is in the position make the power. And especially from Georgia Tech perspective, you may have a good background. If you cultivated the relationship, if you did more than just call and complaining, if you actually went to an event they were at or met them personally or even formed a friendship over the years it could be very valuable so that's that's the way to go about it. Don't sit there and use your mind for nothing, we have a lot of skills. People need, especially the state capital and they don't have staffs or anything they have maybe one secretary position they call it administrate assistant but that person is not there to give them strategic advice on law making and anything like that. They're there to schedule their meetings and to make sure all their paper works in line and stuff like that so they need very intelligent, capable people, trustworthy people, honorable people who can get them advice most lawmakers.

Q: Thank you for sharing that. Is there anything else you want to add or any final words

A: Yeah for students who are just networking in general in finding a job, anything in the public sector, people usually say it's not what you know, it's who you know. And that's important to realize that really you can get a leg up on everyone else simply by being friends or having numerous encounters or connections with the person who has such a big power. But even more important, it's not what you know, it's who you know. You have to know, who you know if that makes sense, if you know who you know because I guarantee you everyone even if you say I don't know anybody who could help me out. If you think hard enough because if you look on Facebook for mutual friends, you can find someone to connect you to someone who may be able to help you out. You can you can figure out. Everyone has connections they don't know nothing about. It just takes little bit of digging and remembering to to find those. I had I found a lot just over the years, oh I'm connected to him somehow. You just got to remember this intricate network that we have especially any academia is a lot like that too when professors go from one college to another college. So like you can look around and say oh, I have a coworker I barely know him but I know he used to work in this company so that there it is complicated paths to get there and you just have to be creative with it and understand your network is a lot bigger than you think it is.

Well that concludes our interview. Thank you for sharing your insight and expertise with our audience today.

Outro: This has been career talks a podcast of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech brought to you by the Nunn School academic services this and other podcast can be found on our website at www.inta.gatech.edu. Thank you for listening.