

## **Nouha Zaabab Podcast**

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.

**Host:** Welcome to Career Talks, a podcast service of the academic services office of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech. Today we are talking with Nouha Zaabab, a fourth year International Affairs student. She is talking to us about how her internship opportunities as a marketing communications intern with the Georgia Muslim Voter Project (GAMVP) and the Annenberg Presidential Learning Center Internship with the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Foundation and Institute. Nouha will discuss how these internship opportunities are guiding her career path and desire to study law. So, I want to get started with introductions. Nouha can you tell us more about yourself. For example, where you're from, why you decided to come to Georgia Tech and how you ended up switching your major to International Affairs?

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**Nouha:** Hey guys, I'm Nouha and like Jessica mentioned, I'm a fourth-year at Georgia Tech studying International Affairs and pre-law. When I applied to Georgia Tech, I was Business and pre-health - I wanted to be a doctor. My first semester I took chemistry. I hated it, but I also took legal aspects of business and I loved it so much. So that's kind of the reason why I made the switch from pre-health to pre-law. And then I also wanted a more technical field, so I decided to do Industrial Engineering. I did that for the first year and a half at Georgia Tech, but somewhere in the middle of my sophomore year I decided it was just not for me and I switched to International Affairs and pre-law to focus on my future as a lawyer and applying to law school.

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**Host:** So Nouha, how did your passion for International Affairs and law lead you to positions with the Muslim Voter Project and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Foundation and Institute?

**Nouha:** So when I switched to International Affairs and pre-law, I took a bunch of pre-law classes including constitutional issues, pre-law seminar, legal aspects of business - which I thoroughly enjoyed because while I learned about the protections guaranteed in the law, I also learned about groups that are most frequently denied their rights. So that's kind of where my passion grew to pursue a career in law and international affairs helped to gain the public policy aspect and world legal aspects of that...

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...So for me one of my communities is the muslim community and the Georgia Muslim Voter Project strives to improve voter turnout within the muslim community and build a strong network of informed muslim citizens, which was right up my alley and I applied to be an intern. I wanted my community to know that their voices matter and can be used to affect change and hold people in power accountable for their actions and bridge that gap in communication with one another when it comes to local issues and policies...

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...I applied to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Institute because it's a world renowned presidential institute and also because their mission is to influence generations of citizen leaders. I also wanted to diversify my work opportunities because a lot of the things I've done related to my muslim community, but I kind of wanted more hands on professional experiences outside that community to see how I can further impact the state of Georgia and other people. Another reason I was pushed to take the internship was, although it was unpaid and out of state, I did get a grant from the Sam Nunn School which I'm really grateful for, which helped me offset the expenses of an unpaid internship out of state.

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**Host:** What was the highlight of each internship?

**Nouha:** I think the highlight of the Georgia Muslim Voter Project internship was just seeing that we can have an impact on a local stage. Being able to go to different events and different venues to register people that I know and don't know in the muslim community was really valuable to me and to explain to them why voting in local elections was so important if not more important than national elections. So I really enjoyed doing that...

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...The highlight for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Internship was definitely we had weekly mentor meetings with the executive staff which I really enjoyed because these were executives who worked under Reagan you know 20 years ago. So being able to chat with his Chief of Staff at the time and other executives was really valuable. They were giving us advice about taking every opportunity and being able to pivot career paths, or making decisions moving forward from your undergraduate degree. So the advice that they shared I'm taking with me as I apply to law school and beyond.

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**Host:** How has Georgia Tech and/or the Sam Nunn School prepared you for these opportunities?

**Nouha:** I think for me especially being STEM at one point at Georgia Tech and then changing my major to a more liberal arts major, I've definitely experienced the best of both worlds and just being at a STEM institute and doing liberal arts, I mean you get to experience so many different things and this interdisciplinary melange. It's like a medley of knowing how to use technical skills, but also personal skills...

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...So I think that helped me a lot in both of my internships and all of the opportunities that I've had outside of school because I'm able to kind of switch gears really fast and have skills in all different areas, but also know how to communicate with different professionals in those various fields. So I think that's kind of the biggest perk of being a liberal arts student at Georgia Tech and being an International Affairs student.

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**Host:** Looking back, what advice would you have wanted about switching majors and/or finding these types of internship opportunities?

**Nouha:** I think for me after going through a few struggles and deciding what major I wanted to do and what I wanted to do with my future, I definitely have no regrets because it's all led me to where I am right now. But I do wish someone told me not to force fitting into a STEM degree at a STEM school. When I applied to several schools and then I decided to come to Georgia Tech, I felt kind of pressured to do a STEM major because you know that's what Georgia Tech is known for; it kind of never crossed my mind to do International Affairs or any political science aspect...

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...But now I know that there's nothing wrong with that and being a liberal arts student at a STEM school like I said before is a great medley of the two. You learn skills from all sides and I just wish I knew that earlier. It's not even just the academic aspect it's also just the atmosphere of Georgia Tech has been really valuable and I'm grateful for it. The people, the driven nature of everyone - I think no matter what degree you get from Georgia Tech, you're going to be successful just because of that, because everyone here is so motivated, so driven, and you're almost forced to pursue your passion. So it's a great thing to be any major at Georgia Tech I think.

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**Host:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Nouha:** I love the Sam Nunn School - that's it!

**Host:** Thanks Nouha we appreciate you speaking to us today!