

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.

My name is Jessica Palacios. Today, we're talking with Zachariah Swint, a fourth-year student studying International Affairs and Modern Languages with a concentration in Spanish. Last summer Zach had an amazing opportunity to intern at the White House as the first class of interns in the Trump Administration. He interned in the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and over the next few minutes will share more about this experience including what the office does, his work, and the responsibilities of the intern position, and what he found most memorable about interning at the White House. He will also share tips about the application process.

Let's get started, Zack can you tell can you start by telling us more about yourself like where you're from, what high school you attended, why you chose to tech, and how you ended up studying International Affairs and Modern Language.

Absolutely I'm kind of a home homegrown guy was born in Marietta lived there for 18 years before I went to Georgia Tech and I went to Hillgrove High School in Marietta. Go Hawks! But I chose Georgia Tech because I think Georgia Tech provided a unique opportunity for students who were technical minded but wanted to study more International Affairs Policy type stuff with the Sam Nunn School and Sam Nunn School is just to such a great reputation is hard for me to turn that opportunity down. So came here and I've had amazing experiences and can't regret it for it for a second.

Host: So we are here to learn more about your experience at the White House. How did you learn about this opportunity and why did you decide to apply?

Zach: I had been looking for internships in the D.C. area because there's something I hadn't experienced yet and I definitely wanted to get in that realm. And a professor had sent me the White House internship application and I was kind of hesitant at first. I didn't know what it was or really anything about it. But as I read more about it I learned what kind of program it was, the amazing opportunities the interns get to do. So decided to apply and applied and sent my application in and that was that.

Host: What was the application and interview process like? Is there any advice you received that was helpful in landing this internship?

Zach: I think the application is pretty standard for a lot of these types of internships. It'll ask you some sort of answer questions, a couple essay questions, your resume, a couple of references. So it's a pretty standard application obviously the questions are tailored to the White House

work. so you just need to do a little research to figure out the best way to answer those. The Interview process is it's pretty different for for a lot of the interns, some people will get a phone call, some people won't get a phone call at all, some people have to go to D.C. and interview. I would say it's a pretty standard that that most people get a phone call from the Intern Coordinator at the White House Zoe Jackman. And it's a pretty standard interview, she just asks you questions. The best advice I can give is just be yourself and to represent yourself in the best light possible and come off as all Sam Nunn School students do is as broad minded and have a depth of knowledge of policy and politics and and you should be just fine.

Host: Once you found out you were selected, what was that feeling like?

Zach: When I found out I was accepted I was pretty ecstatic. The interview timeline for them was pretty delayed because they kind of came into the administration. So I found in late April for a May starts so it was a pretty crazy turnaround for me. But it was honestly just I was a ecstatic. It's just an opportunity that allows you to literally walk down West Exec Avenue and into the West Wing and all through the Eisenhower Building and be around the highest policy making and implementation in the country and probably the world. So it's an opportunity that you just can't give up and I was just absolutely blown away.

Host: So you were an intern in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Can you tell us what kinds of tasks and responsibilities you had under this role?

Zach: Yeah, sure so the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs was an office in the White House Administration that had been dormant for about 10 or so years and because they combined it with the Office of Public Liaison. But then when the new administration came in, they separated back out so there were so many unique opportunities. What they do is they are the relationship builders or the go to people for all other governments the United States. We're talking about governors, mayors, state representatives, local county commissioners, literally every level of governments. So the White House uses this office to communicate policy and listen to change of ideas and viewpoints from all the other governments in the United States so that policies implemented in the most efficient way possible. So as an intern I had pretty generous responsibilities. I was communicating with governors and county commissioners and others. We actually started a new initiative where county commissioners had state days at the White House. Where the White House would invited all of the county commissioners from a states to the White House campus is to meet with representatives from the different agencies and cabinet level officials. So I was really amazing to upstart a program that was pretty successful. So I was doing public liaison work for the branch and Intergovernmental Affairs work. So it was pretty high level stuff which I didn't expect honestly but I just took it wasn't intimidated and ran with it.

Host: What advice would you offer to students interested in interning at the White House?

Zach: I would I would definitely start building a resume now it's pretty highly competitive program. Most of the people there are seniors in college or students in grad school, a lot law a

lot of law students. So I definitely recommend getting some some experience in politics, domestic politics or international politics. And getting your resume built and then I would just research what kind of work interns do and what the opportunities are. If I had known that I would have gotten to sit down with cabinet level officials and other officials in the administration, I would have jumped at the opportunity lot earlier than I did. It's really a unique experience that allows you to really meet and communicate with and build relationships with high level officials not only in the White House but other parts of D.C. So I definitely recommend building your resume now and then just researching what kind of role you want to have, what you want to do with your career and if the White House and shift fits in that path and its absolutely amazing opportunity that you should jump at immediately.

Host: How was it like to work and live in DC?

Zach: D.C. is absolutely incredible I was in Brussels the summer before this and I absolutely adore Brussels but D.C. kind of puts it on another level. There's always something to do, there's always people who talk to you and if you're at all interested in politics it is like a football arena of politics at every happy hour, every time you're walking down the street. It's like it's a moving political arena that you can see. So if you're at all interested in politics, D.C. is incredible. And that's just the work side of things. It's also a beautiful city with so many things to do to keep you busy, the nightlife, the happy hours, whatever it is you want to do there, you have the opportunity to do it. So it is amazing, I recommend to every Sam Nunn student to intern in D.C. at least once.

Host: How do you think your internship has helped with your current position as a political director for a Georgia gubernatorial campaign and how do you envision it helping in the long run?

Zach: I think Georgia Tech and the White House internship give you a similar skill set to succeed in kind of this political fields. At the White House I was obviously coordinating, communicating, and reaching out grassroots style to a lot of officials and those are the kind of the same skill set that you find in campaigns. Currently working for the political director for Clay Tippens. He's the Republican gubernatorial candidate for Georgia and I'm doing very similar work to what I did at the White House. So I think as long as you study hard you know as a Sam Nunn student, you're going to get a lot of good skills that you pick up from your professors that I used while I was at the White House and kind of sharpen my skill set and I'm implementing it now and the White House certainly gave me another tool to add to my skill set. So help in the long run it sets you up for success because it put something on your resume that's always going to pop people are always going to ask about it. And you also get a level of professional accountability and responsibility that I don't think you get anywhere else wearing a suit every day all the time, speaking with White House administrative officials. You're always on your game, you're always on edge ready to perform and that is something that translates to every other job or internship or whatever else you're doing in your life. So I don't think it helps. It's going to mean a long run it would help any other Sam Nunn students well.

Host: Thank you for being with us today. We appreciate your advice and insight on this amazing internship opportunity.

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](http://www.inta.gatech.edu). Thank you for listening.