Ranjini Grove:

If your first week of winter quarter ended anything like mine did, you are probably experiencing a major sense of déjà vu. Having just binged on the Matrix trilogy over the winter break, I am reminded that déjà vu is due to a glitch in the Matrix - it happens when they change something. Let’s hope that they changed it for the better! But bad analogies aside, I know the recent turn of events has been extremely disappointing, scary and frustrating to many of our students. I hope you have all heard from your professors by now about plans for the next few weeks. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

In this newsletter I want to shine the spotlight on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and share some relevant information regarding the program. For those of you who are not aware, CPT is an opportunity for international students on F-1 visas to gain work experience related to their major. It goes without saying that the pandemic and accompanying restrictions have had a huge impact on international students which is why I invited Sharece Bunn, International Students Services (ISS) to share important reminders about the process. Please also consult the following webpage for specifics related to applying for department approval of CPT.

As always, you will also hear from some of your peers about their practical experiences! Please feel free to reach out to them if you have any questions or are looking for advice/encouragement!

Ask Mee-Ling:

Question:
I am a double major with STAT and would like to know how many credits I can count towards both majors.

Answer:

We allow an overlap of 25 credits for double majors. Also, STAT majors who are completing a minor need to be aware that going forward we require at least 9 unique credits in the minor you wish to complete.

From the SPA Desk: Lukas and Oliver

As any student knows, getting into a major can be very stressful. For STEM especially, prerequisites require a lot of time and effort. The past two years in particular have been trying.

At the Statistics and Probability Association, we provide an opportunity to meet like-minded folks, and unwind. We do many many things; workshops on R, guest speakers, panels, career/grad school prep, etc. But above all, the club is an hour a week where you get to see friendly faces.

In the past quarter, we witnessed a record number of SPA members attending our meetings, allowing us to design a t-shirt for the Department of Statistics to be distributed soon. We also hosted a game night as well as an RMarkdown workshop. We are looking forward to more exciting meetings in the upcoming quarter.

We invite everyone interested in Statistics to join us! For more information, please join our discord at https://discord.gg/k2kSf4CxMB. And if you have any other questions, you can always email us at lnaehrig@uw.edu or oli-vert@uw.edu.

We hope to see you!

Your SPA Co-Presidents,
Lukas and Oliver
From the International Students Office

Sharece M. Bunn
Assistant Director
International Student Advising, PDSO/ARO

The last two years have been incredibly challenging in the International Student Advising world. International students have felt it: travel has been hard, internships and other work opportunities have changed a lot, and there’s been a lot of communication via Zoom and email. I’m hopeful that 2022 brings us international students around the globe better luck with academic and career success.

It’s with this in mind that I wanted to share some tips and tricks for CPT and applying with ISS.

- Find an internship or job that is closely tied to your studies.

  ◊ The government requires that your internships and jobs are connected to the major code on your I-20. We require that you write a brief paragraph making the connection. Pro tip: don’t ask ISS how to draw the connection between your major and the job. TELL US! You’re the one who needs to convince us the two are connected, not the other way around.

- Make the most out of your CPT/internship class.

  ◊ I know that some students sign up for the internship class because it’s required, but they don’t put a lot of effort into the reflection pieces. My advice: make your internship course instructor work hard! Get their feedback on the challenges at work. Seek feedback on tying your learning to your future job and career.

- Know the rules of your F-1 visa and immigration status.

  ◊ You can’t begin working off-campus until you have authorization. Apply for CPT in a timely manner.
  ◊ When can you apply for CPT?
  ◊ After you’re registered for your CPT class and you have a job offer letter, apply for CPT. Then, it takes about 2 weeks for an advisor to process the request.
  ◊ Meet with an ISS advisor about your questions related to CPT, time off, OPT, etc. Our advisors have appointments Monday through Friday 9 AM to 4 PM (except Tuesday mornings). It’s fun to meet with you and answer your questions. We’re really here to help you.
  ◊ Check the ISS website. We’re continually updating our website to make the information more relevant to you. It’s our one advising resource that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We’re glad you’re here at University of Washington and are happy to serve you!
Practical Experiences

Mencius Chin
Undergraduate Student

During summer 2021, I was looking for different types of interns. By chance, I knew someone who worked in a consulting company and asked wonder if she can refer me if any suitable positions are available. Luckily, Johnson and Johnson (JnJ) found us and provided me with an internship as a Machine Learning engineer.

My first project at Johnson and Johnson was called Delivery ETA, which is finding the estimation of delivery time of the trucks that transport Johnson and Johnson devices and medicines to either the storage or medical centers. It seemed easy to me at first since JnJ was already working with Google and using their service to calculate the estimation of the trucks, which is mostly accurate due to their well-known map service exists. But the records in our database showed the true delivery time always had a ± 20 minutes difference than the estimation, which is crucial since our devices and medicines are sometimes for the hospitals. My team then decided to: First, improve the accuracy of the point estimation by re-projecting the point to a reasonable place; then train our model to learn how many stops would our driver made every delivery, and which route is preferred when two or more routes are available for our driver. Then by including all those factors in the total estimation calculation, we minimized the error to a ± 5 minutes interval.

Since the first project went amazing, JnJ and my manager extended my internship to the end of 2021. My mentor and I were then assigned to a supply chain problem, finding out the failure part of the entire chain (from design to delivery). The dataset available for us was limited where we didn’t have enough data overlapped from the different stages (design, produce, testing, delivery, etc.), and our job was to research and write an algorithm repleting missing columns (represents different stage) based on existing data in our dataset. We went through missForest, MICE, em, and autoencoders for our data imputation algorithms and our algorithm turned out to be not satisfactory enough that the data our algorithm creates is not representable of the true distribution of each column (it tends to concentrate at the mode due to our logic). So, our part was stopped, and the team went in another direction for solving the problem.

Though the second project didn’t turn out to be perfect, as my manager told me, failures and mistakes are always expected, and it is good to have them so we can take care of them next time. The entire experience at JnJ is wonderful, where I worked out some problems and made progress with the team, and met obstacles that are hard to overcome, which is basically what real work looks like. Working also reminds me of the importance of data security once again from taking our data ethic courses at UW, how we store and where we should utilize our data were mentioned again and again of the entire intern experience.

Subhangi Kabra
Undergraduate Student

Last summer I had the incredible opportunity to work at eBay as a Product Manager Intern. I spent a great chunk of the year 2020 looking for internships, I used all job boards possible to apply to a maximum number of internship postings. I found eBay on Google Jobs and it redirected me to Workday to fill out the application. I had connected with a few individuals from the company prior to applying and actually had gotten a referral for the role.

Working as a Product Manager Intern, I had the opportunity to work on two projects – one was research based and the other was more focused on execution. My manager believed that giving me exposure to both the types of work would give me a complete picture of what Product Management looked like. My research based efforts were primarily for the “View Order Details” page that sellers of eBay looked at to complete their orders. I did competitive analysis, spoke to the different stakeholders, analyzed the data and worked with the design team to develop a prototype incorporating all the feedback I had received during my research process. My execution-based project was redesigning the “Archived Orders” page on eBay, as eBay has been around for more than 25 years some of their
pages call from older services which makes it more challenging to update these pages and thus I worked on rebuilding the archived order page.

All in all, I had such a great time working at eBay. I would highly recommend working there especially because the University Recruiting team takes such good care of its interns and made sure that even though my experience was completely virtual – it felt no less than an in-person time and my opinions felt so valued!

Joia Zhang
Undergraduate Student

After participating in UW’s quarterly Statistics and Probability Association Directed Reading Program (SPA-DRP), my interest in undergraduate research grew. I began looking for a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program—a full-time summer internship funded by the NSF and hosted by different professors and universities across the country. I was elated to have the chance to work with my mentors Dr. Sat Gupta and Dr. Sadia Khalil on randomized response techniques at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) REU program in the department of mathematics and statistics. I found this opportunity through NSF’s running list of active REUs, searchable by field, keywords, and location. Our research team developed a survey model that improves respondent privacy and addresses respondent lack of trust in surveys containing sensitive questions. My focus was deriving formulas for the estimators and coding R simulations (STAT 302 helped a lot) that ultimately verified said formulas. I learned so much about the research process and gained statistical background, much of which I am starting to see in my classes. It’s exciting to both apply course material in research as well as learn concepts in class that you’ve seen the application of.

Throughout the REU, we had professors as guest speakers that gave presentations on their work, held workshops on R, Latex, Python, and machine learning algorithms, and spoke to us REU students about topics ranging from graduate school to diversity and inclusion in academia to general career and life advice. I treasure the knowledge and stories that my mentors shared with me. I grew my understanding of the culture and structure of academia and had a great introduction to it. Since the REU, my research team has continued to work on the manuscript towards publication and presenting our findings at symposia and conferences, including the International Conference on Advances in Interdisciplinary Statistics and Combinatorics (AISC), receiving the first-place presentation award. I’d love to talk about any part of my summer experience with anyone so please feel free to reach out to me at joiaz@uw.edu.