- No, I just wanna say thank you to the interns. It's been a joy to have you guys here. And for ORAU employees, I just would encourage you to think about taking on a mentor this fall and going through the application process. We'll place mentors for the summer of 2025, but we'll open the application process for mentors to apply this fall.

- [Announcer] You're listening to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast." Join Michael Holtz and his guests for conversations about all things ORAU. They'll talk about ORAU, storied history, our impact on an ever-changing world, our innovative, scientific and technical solutions for our customers and our commitment to the communities where we do business. Welcome to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast."

- Welcome to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast." As ever, it is me your host, Michael Holtz from the Communications and Marketing Department at ORAU and we are talking about, this will be our second Matthew, our second annual conversation with the Research and University Partnerships Office, summer intern at ORU. But first Matthew, how's it going? It has been a Monday post CrowdStrike post technology issue Monday, how's it going?

- It's going good Michael. Yeah, this is our second year doing this and I'm super excited. You know, it's a big group conversation, a lot of interns to talk to and learn a little bit more about them, but I'm really excited for the chat so.

- It's always a good time. And Lindsay Motz from the Research and University Partnerships office is here. She is the program manager for all these fabulous people. And Lindsay, let's talk a little bit about the program and then if you would introduce us to this year's group of interns.

- Yeah, absolutely. So we have the opportunity to support some interns across ORAU each year. This is the second year we've done it. We got a bigger group this year, which was great. So we put out a call for applications for mentors in the fall and then we select mentors based on previous internship placement, university partnership agreement and that type of thing and look at our budget. This year, we were able to support six interns for 400 hours over the summer and they're placed across ORAU in all different departments. So it's really exciting to have them working in different areas within the company.

- Awesome, so if you would, if introduce us to this year's group of interns and everyone is your, as you're introduced, tell us where you are doing your internship.

- Yeah, I'll start with Samantha. If you can just tell us your university and the department you're working in at ORAU this summer.

- Yeah, so I attended the University of Tennessee Knoxville. So I live in Knoxville, I commute every day. I'm doing the, in my internship at the Cytogenetic Biosymmetry Lab down at South Campus through ORISE. And I've loved it so far this summer, it's been great.

- Awesome.

- Great, thanks. Noah, can you introduce yourself?

- I'm Noah. I went to Middle Tennessee State University and this summer I'm interning at the main.

- Okay, and Faryal? Hi, I'm Faryal Rafay, I went to University of Oklahoma. I completed my Master's of public health from there and I'm working at the Safety Culture Department this year as an intern. Okay, Julia?

- Hello, I am working from Johnston City. I go to ETSU currently in my fourth year pursuing my degree in my information technology, will hopefully be done this year and I'm working as a quality software assurance intern this summer.

- Awesome.

- Thank you. And Brian?

- Hello, my name is Brian Bros. I'm a third year student at the University of Miami on the pre-law track and this summer I'm working as an intern on the OSA STEM Accelerator project.

- Awesome. So a lot of exciting projects that y'all are working on. A lot of great placements. For everyone just to get started, what is it that drew you to the possibility of being an intern for ORAU? And we'll work backwards and Brian, I'll start with you.

- Yeah, so the first thing that caught my attention was the flexibility as well as the learning curve that comes with working for ORAU. I was attracted to how it had a consortium with universities and how there's people within the company that learned a lot. Were working on different projects every other week as well as was traveling around the country. So that drew my attention as well as the STEM accelerator program that was open to all majors, especially business majors. So those are some of the few things that caught my eye when I was applying.

- Awesome, Julio, how about for you?

- When I was first applying for it, so IT is a big field. You can't really concentrate on one thing until you know the one thing you actually wanna work on is, so the title quality or software quality assurance. I was interested to know what that entail if I was interested in it and I figured the best way to know that is to work in it. And that's pretty much what caught my eye when I first applied.

- Awesome. Faryal, how about for you?

- So like Brian mentioned, the first thing that I saw when I saw the job offer, not the offer, the job ad was the flexibility that ORAU offers. And other than that, the second thing was I really like working with SaaS, which is a statistical software that lets you code and do your analysis and my past experience has been working with SaaS so what drew my attention to this job posting for this internship was other than the flexibility, they were wanting someone who could work with SaaS. So that's really why I chose this internship and applied.

- Awesome, Noah. Like they said, the flexibility just seemed like something that I was interested in and just the ability to like be able to do digital media and learn from actual professionals, that's what really caught my eye.

- Excellent and Samantha?

- So kind of differently, I knew I wanted to work in a lab this summer so the flexibility isn't what caught my eye, but I knew I wanted to stay in East Tennessee. I'm an outta state student so I wanted to experience summer in Knoxville and so having an opportunity to stay here and then as a leadership studies minor, I was always told find a company that aligns with your personal values, it'll be easier and you'll enjoy it more. So the values that ORAU has and stands for really align with mine.

- Awesome.

- So you know, y'all are applying for this internship, you see the capabilities, you see what you're gonna be doing a little bit. So what is something as you're applying, you really hope to take away from this experience and we'll do the same thing. We'll go the opposite direction. So Samantha, what were you really expecting to take away from your internship?

- Honestly, just knowledge. Cytogenetics is something that I had never heard of before and I really wasn't sure exactly what field I wanted to go into after graduation. I knew I wanted to do something related to cancer biology and so learning more about what they do here really piqued my interest as they do a lot of research with cancer patients and cancer treatment. And so I just wanted to learn a lot of skills and learn about what research was like as a professional career and I've learned a lot.

- That's awesome. Noah, how about you?

- I really just wanted to gain like on the job experience. 'Cause like I took classes, like we do like film stuff in there, but it's nothing like what we've done or the stuff that I've done this summer when it comes to like real professionalism and stuff like that. And I just wanted to learn from people who have been in the industry and just continue to grow my knowledge in this industry.

- That's awesome. Faryal, how about you?

- I really wanted to polish my skills and my knowledge, existing knowledge of SaaS. But I really wanted to learn more skills and the majority, the most important reason of why I chose this internship was that it would help me and set me up for a future job position. You know, put me in a better position to apply for something permanent later on.

- Gotcha. You kind of talked about there's so many different areas. What about this your kind of experience were you hoping to take away?

- Like I was talking about the areas so IT, like I was saying, has a bunch of fields. I've done it all, I feel like, but not maybe done at all. Done a lot of things in the field, but the QA was never on the top of my mind quality assurance. So when I saw the job posting, which is similar to what my older brother, he also got an internship this summer for a software quality assurance and I was asking him about it, he said, yeah, go for it. It's something that people don't talk about much anymore. Sometimes companies kind of brush them over, but I've learned that it's important and that it isn't all boring. It's a, I hope to take away the, I hope I still like it in 10 weeks when the 10 weeks are done. I think I will, I'm having fun with it. Our mentor Anthony Zbysinski is the lead QA on the West team. I'm pretty much job shadowing him and watching and learning what it means to be a QA and I think my main takeaway will be that maybe I found my field that I wanna work in.

- Awesome, I love that. Brian, how about you?

- Yeah, so I'm on the pre-law track and I know what type of law I want to enter, whether it's corporate law or real estate law, but I'm open to any field. So especially with this internship, it's showing me another side that I feel like people from my areas specifically, we don't really know a lot about nuclear energy, which is seen what ORAU does. So this internship has challenged me as well as allowed me to deepen my critical thinking and see different sides, bipartisan issues that pop up a lot in the world today. So I just hope to be able to take away and be more well-rounded as well in different fields and give the science field more of a look when I'm entering the field of law.

- Awesome.

- Brian, go ahead and take a little bit and talk about your intern as well and let us know who you've been working with and kind of your work as well.

- Yeah, so I've been working with Dr. Olivia Blackmon and so far during my internship experience, she's kind of allowed me to be my own person, attend meetings with her host meetings at times and reach out to people I believe can contribute deeply to what we're trying to accomplish. So the good thing working with Dr. Blackmon is she's original, she's herself, she shows you how to network with people, how to talk to people. She's always introducing me to other people on staff or different companies or events that we attend to. So that's a good thing about Dr. Blackmon. I really appreciate how she allows me to be able to go seek other people and gain their insight as well as learn what they did in their career. So the good thing about my internship, it has allowed me to meet a lot of people in the field of nuclear energy as well as higher education and understand from all walks of life how they ended up in their position now and how they want to advance their career or what aspirations they have their selves. So I really appreciate ORAU as well as Dr. Blackmon for allowing me to meet people in the government, people in nuclear energy as well as people in higher education. So overall, just a great networking experience, I would say.

- Awesome. Faryal, how about for you?

- I'm working with Dr. DaVita Hammond and she is a really nice supervisor. She is very understanding, she's really nice. She is very, so I'm a mom of an infant and if anything comes up she's really understanding and she'll let me take a few hours off and she is very knowledgeable, very experienced and she's a very down to earth person and I've been having a really nice experience working and learning from her this summer.

- Awesome, Noah?

- So I'm working with Don, Bo and Ben this summer and I really enjoy how they've given me like kind of my own like creative control of like projects that we're doing as well as like teaching me like new techniques and like giving me pointers and stuff and stuff that I can improve on and it's just been a really good experience.

- Great, and Samantha?

- Yeah, I'm working with Dr. Balajee and the entire CBL team this summer and it's been great. They're super understanding and encouraging of me to take every opportunity to network or learn things. I had the opportunity to take one of the radiation emergency medicine courses with REAC/TS, which isn't necessarily working in the lab, but it was still really awesome experience and just any opportunity to network and meet people has been really awesome.

- Awesome. Alright, so back to the question at hand is you talked a little bit about your mentor in our last question. Talk about just the whole mentorship experience.

- Yeah, my first week I started out meeting the team, very small team about probably, I think I heard it was the smallest team working on a project. About 10 of us met everybody, met my mentor, that's where I spend all my hours on. So I've gotten to know Anthony Zbysinski pretty well. He's very kind, showed me what we were gonna do. He even drew, he showed me the 10 week plan he had up, so he's very well prepared for me. He didn't just rope me in with no plan. I'm very happy about that. The plan he showed me made me excited. He had a week one laid out, which was just basic introductions, welcome to the team. Week two had me job shadow him, making support tickets, showing me the QA tickets he drew up, showed me how to do that, showed me the projects we were working on. And week three had me actually doing the thing that he wanted me to do. Had a good time. He was showing me how he did all his manual testing, his regression testing, his automation testing, which was more software part of the testing you would write scripts to test the projects that we were working on. And even with to show me how he made it, as far as I know, he is gonna show me how I can make some, which he's already shown me some a little bit. But I'm excited to write my own 'cause we've done it on some test projects, excited to write on an actual project. But yeah, he's shown me what it means to do manual quality assurance and then there's software like where you actually write down the scripts for it. And he has plenty planned out for me in the upcoming weeks.

- Good, good, it sounds great.

- I like to thank Anthony Zbysinski for that plan that he has laid out.

- For sure. It sounds like a great opportunity and really for everyone Lindsay, that's really kind of the point, right? I mean the interns are really, the internships are really designed to give that actual hands-on doing the work experience, not just, you know, sort of be paper pushers and grunt workers but actually do some valuable work.

- Yeah, absolutely. That is really clear to the mentors when they apply for an intern that this is a learning experience. This is not a staff augmentation. So we want these individuals coming in to walk away with knowledge and skills that they didn't have before the internship.

- Awesome and I know, for some of you it's early, I know Noah's been around a little bit longer. Is there a particular project or activity that you've been part of that you're particularly proud of at this stage of your internship? And Faryal, I'll start with you with that question.

- So I've been working on the SCIP abstract, which stands for Safety Culture Investigation Panel. I've been working on this project and what I've been doing is I've been doing a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of how the safety culture views of the people working at nuclear sites have changed before and after COVID. So the quantitative analysis, I'm kind of doing it in SaaS to see how the people working as a nuclear places think that safety at their workplace was before COVID and how it has changed after COVID. And the qualitative part of it is anytime the safety culture team does an evaluation at any of the nuclear sites, they come up with a report to see how they've done the evaluation and what the workers perceive to be the safe, the most safe at the workplace and the least safe and how they could, how the management could take effort, like could make efforts to improve safety at the workplace. So the qualitative part of what I'm doing is going over those reports to see what the workers think about safety at their workplace. And once I have the quantitative and the qualitative parts done, we could just come up with a crosswalk to see how the safety is. Safety viewpoint is both quantitatively and qualitatively and just kind of put together a presentation to present to the safety in culture panel. The presentation needs to be presented in August this year.

- Okay, okay, awesome. Noah, how about for you?

- The project that I'm probably the most proud of is the JSTI West. I had the opportunity to go down to Albuquerque, New Mexico and film for a week and then edit a wrap up video for the two week program that they do And just going down there with Bo and getting to film and just learn from him and learn how he does things down there, it's just a really good opportunity and that's definitely what I'm most proud of.

- Awesome, Samantha?

- Yeah, so project that I'm probably the most proud of has been the delayed effects project that I'm working on. So project studying the delayed effects of radiation as a cancer treatment and in the certain case we're studying we haven't seen a lot of damage, which kind of wasn't what we were expecting, but it also goes to show that the person who got treatment was able to get an effective surgery before and didn't need a lot of radiation. And so it kind of goes to show that, yeah, bummer we didn't get the data we expected but it was a good overall saying like if you get surgery, you can effectively treat your cancer pretty well with minimal damage.

- Hmm, excellent, Brian?

* Yeah, so the project I'm probably most proud of is the AAAS White House Initiative program. AAAS stands for the American Association for the Advancement of Science. And so far with that project we've worked on increasing the workforce, the diversity amounts, different people from different backgrounds, economic backgrounds coming into the workforce. So the main point of the project is seeing how can we get different people in STEM fields and keeping the retention of employees in STEM fields. So I think it's interesting as well as seeing the data, the numbers and seeing what areas lack the most, people entering the work field as well as what colleges can increase the amount of participants entering STEM. So I would say that's a project that I've enjoyed so far, especially meeting people that work at AAAS and working on surveys and foundations and organizations that can come together and help us focused on this one goal mission of increasing STEM opportunities for all.

- Awesome and Julio.

- Yeah, I've enjoyed working on the Warriors project. That's the sole project. There's a bunch of many projects to go along with it, but we've been working on the pages and I've enjoyed, every time I've found an issue, it's always been fun to find an issue because that's the main role. Finding issues, breaking the website. Anytime I found one, it's always felt good to find it and report it and write the details on how to recreate the issue and feedback on how well would fix it. So anytime I was able to successfully create a ticket, it's always been a good feeling.

- Great. Oh is that good sense of a confident when you get things done right. So you guys, we talked a little bit about what you're looking for in the opportunity, kind of the projects you're working on now. Let's talk about the future a little bit, with what you've learned so far, what is kind of the career path goal for you? Where should we see you in the next five years? What's your kind of overall plan after you get done with this internship and get outta school? So we'll start with Noah.

- So five years down the road I'd like to be doing like a creative director type job, something very similar to this or get projects and then work at 'em and finish 'em up. But just like the whole like creative path, that's what I wanna be doing.

- Awesome, how about you Brian? I know you said you wanted to go into laws or any other kind of more detailed plans right now for you?

- Yeah, so I'm finishing after this year I'll be a senior, so I have two more years and then the goal is to go straight into law school and then after law school by then, that's probably four years down five. So hopefully from then I'm working with a big firm entering corporate law. I'm open to any law field as of now, but the main goal is work in corporate law and then from there, you know, branch out and then have my own firm one day and then if not be one of the top attorneys in the world. So we'll see where we go.

- Awesome, I love it. Faryal, how about for you? What's kind of the long term goal for you?

- So I really wanna work as a healthcare data analyst because I really like working with numbers and programming also because I really would like to tele work and I feel that healthcare data analyst jobs are mostly tele work, but yeah, provide you with the opportunity through remote work and yeah, just because I love programmings and programming software, so that's where I would like to see myself in five or 10 years.

- Awesome, Julio, how about you?

- The five year plan after working on such a small team, I don't know if I could ever work in a large team again, everything feels more tight and manageable. So I hope in five years I land myself in a small team in a IT role as whether that's a QA or not, who knows? But I do want be somewhere in a small team like this in a couple years. I like the work environment.

- Samantha, how about you?

- Yeah, so I wanna get my PhD most likely studying cancer biology, just working on deepening our understanding of cancer as it exists in all organisms, but also specifically in humans and how we treat it. So in five years, I'll probably still be in a PhD program. I have two more years of my undergrad degree left. But after that I hope to work in some type of research lab. I'd really like to see myself working at a research hospital. That way I can have some interaction with the people that I'm trying to help.

- I know y'all are a little bit spread out. Do you all have the opportunities to interact together, spend time together during the course of your internship? Have you had bonding time?

- With each other? No.

- No.

- Yeah, I don't recognize, I pretty much with my team, like.

- So Julio came on a little bit later, the interns that were hired earlier in the summer did have an opportunity to come to Oak Ridge a couple of them, the ones that were already there of course could, was very convenient. But we did a tour of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, some of the facilities out there and then of south campus, so.

- Okay, so it's just a function of staggered start time sort of.

- Yeah and schedules. Not everybody was able to travel at the same time, so.

- Sure, sure, that makes sense. Lindsay, I know that one of the interns was unable to join us for the conversation. Do you want to talk a little bit about them?

- Sure, yeah. Amanda Smith unfortunately wasn't able to join us. She is both working for ORAU attending school and has her own business. So she had a conflict for today, but I'll just read you a short blurb that she sent about herself. So she received her bachelor's degree in data analytics management from Western Governor's University in June of 2021. She was very interested in health issues, especially since COVID-19 was occurring and that's how she decided her career path. She is currently enrolled at the University of Alabama Birmingham and she is pursuing a master's degree in public health with a concentration in epidemiology.

- Awesome. Well we're sorry she couldn't join us, but glad to know a little bit more about her. Last question for everyone, we're just gonna go around the horn and the question is, what brings you joy? And Samantha, I'm gonna start with you.

- Honestly, my friends and my family, being an out-of-state student, all my family is at least four hours away from me. So my friends that I've made here have really become my found family. So just being able to spend time with them, especially being in Knoxville this summer, seeing them weekly outside of class and just being able to spend time with them has been really joyful for me. I was really excited to be able to do that.

- Awesome, Noah, how about you?

- Kinda the same thing as her, my family and friends. I went to school in Murfreesboro, which is only like two and a half hours away, but the two years that I was gone, it's really been nice to finally be home for a summer and just kinda get to hang out with my family more and just see my friends from high school more. So that's been really nice.

- Awesome.

- Faryal.

- Professionally, the work that I do brings me joy and personally I would say my family. I'm a mother of two sons. My youngest one was born two and a half months ago. So just spending time with them and just getting to, just playing with them brings me a lot of joy. My sons are, they mean the world to me.

- Awesome, Julio.

- Family and purpose. I love being with my family, whether they are too much sometimes, but I could not live a single week without them, which is why I make the two hour commute to see them every weekend.

- Gotcha.

- And purpose, I love having a reason to wake up. I like whether that's having a plan for the day, getting up for work, I like, I wanna be able to do something today. I don't like having nothing planned, so it's nice to wake up for a reason.

- Awesome, Brian?

- I would say family brings me joy. I enjoy being back home from college, I live on campus so every year that's like a big break from staying home. I do visit a lot since I'm about 30, 40 minutes away from home, but it's definitely feels nice during the summer to be back, relax, chill, eat home, cooking, and then go back to normal lives such as playing basketball, going to the gym. But being around my family, I would say is probably the best thing in the summer that I look forward to enjoying every day.

- Awesome. Lindsay, how about you?

- My family for sure, but a silly thing that brings me joy is definitely Dollywood. Everybody makes fun of me for my Dollywood obsession. So I have a four year-old and a 7-year-old and we go to Dollywood a lot.

- Awesome and Matthew, I'm gonna ask that question of you as well.

- Yeah, I'm to echo everyone else's family, of course. I have a almost 3-year-old son, he'll be three in August. So definitely playing around my little toddler. We just got back from the beach. So watching his joy and you know, just that toddler stage of life where they have no care in the world is definitely brings joy to me as well. Just watching him run around without any care in the world of what he's doing. Also sports, I'm a huge sports fanatic, so anytime I can sit down in front of a TV and watch a sporting event, that brings me joy as well. So I would say those are the two big things, family and sports for sure.

- Very cool. And for me, I will say family and friends as well. My best friend actually was just in town for the weekend and we got to spend some great time together. So yeah, it was a great weekend. Lindsay, is there anything that we wanna talk about? Anything you wanna make sure we touch on before we wrap things up?

- No, I just wanna say thank you to the interns. It's been a joy to have you guys here and for ORAU employees, I just would encourage you to think about taking on a mentor this fall and going through the application process. We'll place mentors for the summer of 2025, but we'll open the application process for mentors to apply this fall.

- Awesome. Well, Samantha, Noah, Faryal, Julio, Brian and Lindsay, thank you so much for joining Matthew and me for this conversation and for this time together, I really, really appreciate.

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