Internships help undergrads bring it all together

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Hala Bowen (BSM ’14) had always dreamed of owning her own concert venue, so when, as part of her business integration capstone course, she got the chance to do an internship at the Civic Theatre, she jumped at the opportunity.



As part of her internship at the Civic Theatre, Hala Bowen (BSM '14) built spreadsheets to recap each event's financial performance just hours after the show.

“Working for the Civic was my dream job, basically,” laughs Bowen, an Atlanta native who majored in entrepreneurship. “Being able to be a part of all the decisions that go into booking and running a music venue was just an amazing experience.”

Built in 1906 by the Shubert family, renowned developers of New York's Broadway district, the Civic went through a host of incarnations in its long history, everything from vaudeville house to discotheque, before shutting its doors in the 1980s. After lying in disrepair for nearly 25 years, Bryan Bailey (BSM '02) partnered with developer and owner Brian Gibbs (BSM '95) in 2012 to return the elegant Beaux-Arts theater to its original use as a live event space.

Bowen worked alongside Bailey, the Civic's managing partner, for 16 weeks, learning everything it takes to run a successful entertainment venue. She was no mere lackey. In addition to assisting with marketing and logistics, she created an Excel template for Bailey that pulled data from the theater's point-of-sale system to create a recap of each event just hours after the show. She also helped build a template that used previous event data to predict the performance of upcoming events.

"There are so many things that go into making it a great show for the venue that you don't think of unless you're plugging in the numbers," Bowen says. "That's what I liked best — getting my hands dirty seeing what actually makes things successful."



Hala Bowen says the internship helped her understand what it takes to produce successful live events.

“She tackled everything we threw at her,” says Bailey. “By the end of her internship, she was definitely contributing a substantial amount, and I think the best part is she was taking the things she learned in school and applying them to the real world.”

The undergraduate internship program is the brainchild of Larry Merington, adjunct lecturer in management and instructor in the business integration capstone. While internships at the graduate level are traditionally part of the job-search process, Merington says his goal is more educational.

“The capstone is intended to push the students to bring together all the skills they’ve learned in the last three-plus years,” explains Merington. “Internships are a way for students to go into a real business and see firsthand how the things they’ve learned in school can be applied to solve financial or marketing or operational problems.”

This year, Merington’s students interned with clients including the National World War II Museum and a locally based hotel and hospitality group. While the program is currently voluntary, Merington hopes eventually to recruit enough clients to make it a required part of the class.

“This is really a bridge,” adds Merington. “A bridge between your academic career and putting it into practice.”

For Bowen, her internship with the Civic helped her realize there were other ways to be involved in music and live event production. Inspired in part by Bailey, she earned her real estate license after completing her internship. Today, as a marketing and sales associate with tech firm showNets, she helps coordinate Wi-Fi and Internet services for trade shows, marketing events and major venues.

“Even though my passion is live music, there’s usually a concert for each of these huge conferences,” Bowen says, “so it’s cool to be part of another side of producing live events.”