

My internship was a predominantly positive experience. I was able to go to a very beautiful county, I didn't have to learn an additional language- although I had to learn new terminology and definitions for words-, and I learned new things about myself as well as further develop new skills and skills I already had.

My arrival to New Zealand went very well. My supervisor picked me up from the airport and took me to the flat I stayed at for the duration of my internship. One of my flat mates greeted me and took me on a small tour of Wellington CBD- where the nearest grocery stores were, where my office was near, etc.-. The start of my internship was a little rough but good. My first day of my internship I forgot my outlet convertor at my flat. But it was ok as I spent the first day reading materials and just learning about what kind of organization my host site is and what they do for farmers and rural communities.

My expectations were not my reality, as is often the case with expectations. As time went on, I was not involved in as many projects as I anticipated and there were a few culture shocks I had to adjust to. The main shock I adapted to was the work culture. In New Zealand, people work hard, but they also really take time off and enjoy their lives. If I finished all of my tasks in a day, I wasn't expected to stay till a certain time, I was expected to leave for the day and be done or help in another task if it was early in the afternoon (but not required to). It was really hard for me to adjust to as I am always used to working from start till stop- sometimes longer- so the concept of work till you finish your work or the end time rolls around was very different for me. I was also shocked at how many days people could take off and how, if you weren't feeling all that good, you could/were expected to work from home.

I got sick (common cold) the second week of my internship and had to work from my flat for a day. But I was in the office the next day even though my supervisor was looking at me like I was crazy and told me I could work from my flat again if I wanted to. The flexibility of being able to work in office or out of the office was very interesting to me. It reminded me of some of my classes that had hybrid options where you could be in class or participate via zoom. I really liked the flexibility as it meant that you didn't have to compromise your health or feel bad for having a small cold in the office- you still had the ability to work and/or participate in meetings.

The other expectation I had was it was going to be spring time. While it was spring, I was expecting a warm spring and was very surprised at how cold it was the first few weeks I was there. It was also a bit cold as I was coming from summer heat to post-winter/early-spring weather which is usually cold. It was just a funny experience to have the weather be different than I anticipated. I learned to really check weather reports and was glad I packed a warm jacket. But what really blew me away was how beautiful New Zealand was. There was so much green which really helped decrease me homesickness (and increase it when I saw a landscape that made me feel like I was back in Oregon). It made me grateful for the beauty in Oregon. I also missed fall- one of my favorite times of year in Oregon due to all the colors in the leaves. Seeing flowers bloom again helped ease that feeling of loss. And just getting outside and being in the green really helped ease my homesick feelings.

As to cultural expectations, I didn't really have any aside from expecting that I might not really understand what people were saying- be it use of different terms or the accent. As it went, I understood the accent pretty well- New Zealander's tend to talk faster and some of the South Island accents threw (and still throw) me a bit- especially on phone calls. I was not expecting people to like my accent as much as they did or even realize I would have an accent. I think it was mainly from living in one place my whole life and just not connecting the dots that I was going to be the odd one out.

One of the harder things to get used to- that I wasn't expecting- was, once people realized I was American, everyone wanted to talk about American politics and what I thought of Trump or what they thought of Trump and they wanted me to smile and nod along with them. It was harder than I expected, because a lot of people who started talking American politics didn't really know how the American electoral system worked or how it varied by state. It made me realize that as much as American politics is discussed, a lot of how the system works is overlooked and people don't realize how different the US is set up in terms of governing. There are three levels of governance (local, state, and federal) instead of just two (local and federal).

One of the biggest differences between New Zealand and the US that I wasn't expecting to be so pronounced was the treatment of indigenous populations. In New Zealand, the Māori language is an official language. It's not only taught in schools, but every sign, speech, or anything made for the public has a Māori translation with it. New Zealand really seemed to embrace Māori culture and promote it. Compare that to the US and it was night and day. It was very interesting to learn and experience Māori customs and learn some of the language!

The longer I was in New Zealand, the more I got used to the more laidback and very welcoming culture. People are really nice and treat you well if you treat them well. My co-workers really liked learning about American culture and customs. They really enjoyed the Halloween party I threw as they never really celebrated Halloween before. I also noticed the longer I interned at my host site, the more I was able to bridge the culture gap and understand what people were saying when they referred to different sports teams (and get used to football meaning soccer).

But, on the other side, there were also people who would point out "how American" this or that was without necessarily asking if it was American or not (a lot of the time it was similar but not quite- ex. America had similar customs but it was closer to British culture). Another aspect of that I couldn't quite get over was when people tried to explain certain American culture aspects or relate different aspects of New Zealand culture to aspects of American culture (not that it was bad, the aspects they tried to relate were just not the same or similar at all). In some cases, some New Zealanders looked down on some American cultural items and experiences.

One example of a looked down on American cultural item was Starbucks. I was homesick one day and brought a Starbucks drink to work (it was on the way). All of my co-workers stopped what they were doing and just stared at me and my Starbucks beverage. I don't think I will ever forget how one of my co-workers said "You know we have better coffee here

right?” It was a funny experience, but it was really weird how big of a deal everyone made of me bringing a Starbucks into the office and how sweet I liked my coffee or hot chocolate.

An interesting aspect of living in New Zealand was being able to try American brands like Oreos or M&Ms. They tasted slightly different than they did in the US. I also noticed how some products like tomato sauce (ketch-up) had more sugar in it while hot chocolate had less sugar in it. I didn't realize how different sugar pallets could be. But one of the really fun things was learning how big fish and chips was. The office I interned in had a fish 'n chips staff wide lunch once a month. Everyone ordered fish and chips and ate it together in the conference room. It was really fun.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was really learning to live and be alone. In the US I lived at home and I was just used to being around people that I was really comfortable around and could talk to. But once I was in New Zealand, although there was facetime, I wasn't able to be around people I was comfortable with. Everything was new and overwhelming and I was trying to process it. What really helped was getting into a routine. During the week, I woke up by 7, made myself tea and breakfast, got ready for my internship, made my lunch, walked to my internship, would work till 12pm, break for lunch, go back to work till 4pm, walk back to my flat, change, maybe go for a walk or answer emails/correspondence, make dinner, get ready for bed, and go to sleep. Having this routine with the option (and sometimes forcing myself) to go for a casual walk was really helpful. I learned more of the city and was able to get some exercise. The weekends were a lot more casual depending on where I was. A lot of the time I was visiting people and new places- so having an audiobook or three downloaded and ready to go really helped me feel less lonely and comforted (audiobooks are very familiar for me).

Another big challenge was getting used to doing a lot of the more mundane office work my co-workers didn't want to do. As an intern, I did get coffees for some meetings or get lunches for big meetings. I also did a lot of reviewing and editing of policy documents from the policy team looking for typos or other mistakes and to make sure an uninformed audience could understand what the document meant. I also helped the communications team by writing a few articles for Federated Farmer's newspaper as well as letters to potential sponsors and donors for different projects my host site wanted to aid with. I was hoping and expecting to be a little more involved with the policy process- maybe researching issues more or being able to write up small reports on specific issues or what my host site had said or done on an issue in the past. I also wasn't as busy as I thought I was going to be which was hard. I am very used to just working or doing something constantly, so having lulls in work flow was really hard. To get around this I would write small reviews/analyses on documents my host site had previously released or on documents that I had edited/reviewed. It really helped me stay engaged in the work I was doing and keep busy.

There were a couple assignments I had to complete for credit for the specific classes I was enrolled in: I had to keep a weekly journal talking about what work I was doing and how it reflected to my major, reflect on how my experience impacted my potential future careers, and how this experience grew any skill sets. I also had a midway and final evaluation I had to complete. For the most part, it was fairly easy to complete. One of the weirdest skillsets I

acquired while in my internship was working on websites and being able to insert links, format web content, and insert photos on a website. I had never done anything like it before but it was fun to contribute a lot of the policy knowledge I had about a specific issue onto a website. Outside of emailing these weekly reports and the evaluations to my overseeing professor, I didn't have much contact with any OSU faculty and staff- aside from emailing one of my former professors about all the WWI and WWII memorials I found in Wellington.

After being in New Zealand, specifically Wellington, for 12 weeks, I really wish I had really debated the clothing I brought. There were a couple shirts I didn't wear as well as a skirt and dress. I really wished I had just stuck to my gut instinct and only brought the clothes I knew I was going to wear. I don't like to wear skirts or dresses so I really can't tell you why I brought one of each- it would have saved room if I hadn't brought them. I also brought an extra pair of dress shoes I wore once- I should have left those at home too. They took up suitcase space that would have been more useful for souvenirs from New Zealand. I also wish I had researched more of what the weather in Wellington was going to be like. I was not really prepared for the wind- and it was cold. Wellington isn't called Windy Wellington for no reason. It was very common to have high winds almost every day. It was unusual if a day didn't have wind.

A small shock to me (coming from a rural town and background) was the bus and train system in the Wellington region. Being able to go from point A to point B without a long walk (especially since I didn't have a car during my internship) was really nice. I was able to explore the city faster and even just go for a ride if I wanted to get out of my flat. It was also nice to feel so connected as I come from a rural town where you have to drive to the next town or two over to really do anything or go shopping.

Future advice to interns: check what the weather will be like and look at the wind! Even if the weather looks warm, just bring a warm jacket- you never know what the wind will do or if it will be a warm or cold wind. Be prepared to be lonely. You are in a different country with a different culture. New Zealand had a very drink heavy culture. People usually went out drinking to socialize. If you are not a big drinker- find low alcohol drinks or non-alcoholic drinks you like so you can still participate. Do not be afraid to go out- just make sure you are being safe: watch your drink, careful what streets you walk down, and have a contact person you can message when you get back to where you're staying or call and talk to as you walk back (it can give you a bit of comfort if you're walking back to where you're staying at night on unfamiliar roads).

When it comes to finding a flat, it will be stressful. I had my accommodation sorted only for them to pull out the week before I was set to arrive. That put me into a mad scramble of trying to find a place to stay. I ended up in a flat that I really wasn't that happy in. I became really good friends with one of my flat mates, but the flat was not very nice. That being said- unless you are sure you will love the flat- make sure you visit it first! Either opt to stay with a host family for a few weeks- which will give you people to help you adjust your first few weeks in a new location- or stay in a hostel while you find a flat. Giving flat. Giving yourself the opportunity to not only see where your potential flat is, but who you would potentially be living with is immense. You can see if you not only like the place, but if you will get along with the people that live there too.

Being comfortable in where you live will go a long way in helping you adjust to the new country and culture you are in. In addition, it can help make any holidays you might be missing home a bit easier to manage. Missing holidays may or may not be easy for you- depends on the holiday and if/how you celebrate it. Make sure you give yourself extra grace during missed holidays. It's normal to feel sad or angry- get yourself a treat or go on an experience to help take your mind off it and give you a fun activity to do. It can go a long way in helping make yourself feel less lonely or like you are missing out. I had a birthday while I was completing my internship and I was very lucky to have a couple who had hosted me several times through a small party for me. It was very nice to know that there were people in New Zealand that cared about me.

As to personal growth, I learned a lot. Mainly, I did a lot of reflecting and analyzing of things I thought I knew and things that were new to me. For example, I realized towards the end of my internship that I was doing a lot of things because I thought I should or because people had told me I had to because they had liked it or wanted to try it. Or I had told myself I liked it even though I didn't. I realized I was living for other people and not really pursuing things that made me happy. It can be really hard to make the choice to do things you enjoy and then find what activities those are. I found that I had a hard time figuring out what made me happy so I set one goal or thing I wanted to accomplish every morning. Whether it was making a nice dinner, walk x number of steps, or make time watch an episode of a tv show I really liked. Learning to do things for myself or that I genuinely enjoyed was hard, but made me feel better.

One example of how I did fun things for myself was once a week, I would take myself out for breakfast or dinner. I would go to a restaurant I really wanted to try or one I really liked and get what I wanted instead of something I felt I should get. I would listen to an audiobook while I ate and take my time to just be present and doing something nice without shaming myself or feeling like I should be/needed to be doing something. Basically, I'm learning to give myself permission to live and be me, as dumb as it sounds.

As to professional growth, I attended some of my very first networking events. As it turns out, I am still in fact shy and have a hard time talking to new people. Part of it is that I have no idea what I should say or talk about so I just end up in the corner. I would make a point to introduce myself to at least five people so I would have the opportunity to meet new people and learn more about different industries in New Zealand. It was not easy, but over time, it got easier as I had more practice learning what guidelines I followed for an introduction (name, job/position, description of what you do, ask questions).

I also learned how to interact with my co-workers in a more professional way. I've been farming for a long time and for the most part all interactions are very informal. Being in a corporate office and having a desk and daily tasks was very new. I was able to improve my oral communication as well as written communication as I had never written shorter emails sending a document to my supervisor or co-worker before. I also learned a new closing phrase: instead of "kind regards," a lot of New Zealanders use "Cheers."

For cultural growth, I was able to attend a Māori cultural experience. It was really fun and amazing to be able to learn about Māori traditions and beliefs and participate in learning some of the skills they passed down through the generations. It was really neat to see how important family and culture was to the tribe I visited. It was very family oriented with the entire extended family being involved. In some ways it reminded me of a few of the Scandinavian Festival in Junction City- having singing and dancing in traditional costume as well as traditional food. But it was different in that I had never seen a Haka or really been able to learn about an indigenous culture before.

I also learned more about New Zealand culture in general. I was not given an orientation aside from things I could do to stay safe so it was just thrown into the deep end so to speak. But I learned a lot. My co-workers were very eager to share things they liked with me. One day, everyone brought in their favorite New Zealand candy or biscuit (basically a cookie) for me to try. The funny thing about trying biscuits was I immediately thought people were bringing biscuits (like bread biscuits) but it turned out to be very similar to cookies (I was told they were not cookies, they were biscuits). The closest thing New Zealander's had to American biscuits were scones. It took a while to think of a New Zealand biscuit instead of an American biscuit in my mind. And sometimes I still have to stop and remind myself it means a cookie (or something very close to a cookie).

Overall, my internship was good. I learned a lot. Some of what I learned it hard to explain, as it was personal growth like learning to live on my own and really manage my own time. One thing I wish I had was brought a hobby like a coloring book or something else to give me something to do on windy rainy days. I was surprised how open and welcoming all of my co-workers were to me. They seemed to be very excited to have an American in the office and excited that I had a lot of farming experience. One project I helped on was giving feedback on a radio/news type app my host site was developing. They are trying to provide an app where members can go to listen to news from my host site as well as other news stations. I gave feedback on how it was to navigate and how long members would have to look at the screen when they are driving machinery.

My internship also gave me the opportunity to learn more about how New Zealand's government is set up and how laws are made and passed. It was interesting to compare that to the US and see how New Zealand was able to pass bills faster as they only had one chamber, but that didn't mean the government was necessarily more efficient or better, it just meant the government passed more legislation. The quality of the bills passed is what pointed to an efficient and good government.

My internship also gave me the opportunity to experience all this in a safe environment. I met and became friends with people who really cared about me and wanted me to be safe. I also had several people and support networks through OSU I could reach out to if I found myself in a bad situation or was really struggling. It was really helpful to know I had those options, but also know and take responsibility that, at the end of the day, my success and happiness depended on me and what I chose to do or pursue. My internship really opened my eyes to self-accountability, self-responsibility, and my ability to thrive in a new, deeper way than I was previously aware of.