

Viner Scholar Natalia on scoring an internship with Microsoft and graduate school advice



1. How did the opportunity to work with Microsoft come about?

Microsoft reached out to me on LinkedIn to apply to the Finance Rotational Program, from there I had one phone interview and then Microsoft flew me to Seattle, WA for the final round interview.

2. What does a typical day look like interning for Microsoft?

Every day was different. For my internship, I had three main projects, but my manager wanted to make sure I understood Microsoft's culture so every day was filled with different events, including meetings, one-on-ones, lunch & learns, and much more.

3. What was the biggest lesson/ takeaway from your internship?

The biggest lesson to take away would be to always be curious, listen, and ask meaningful questions. You are in a meeting with professionals who are passionate about what you're working on and just because you are an intern doesn't mean you can't have a voice. It's actually the opposite, as an intern you have the opportunity to ask questions to help understand the bigger picture.

4. What is your advice for scholars who are applying for internships, like Microsoft?

When applying for internships, you have to try to make your resume stand out in its own way. Instead of involving yourself in too many clubs without a leadership position, find a couple that you are passionate

about and become a leader in those organizations. During internship interviews, they are more looking at personality, because they can teach you the rest. So make sure can showcase what your passionate about on your resume and can speak to it.

5. How did you graduate undergrad early? Tips for freshmen scholars?

Coming into the University of Florida, I went to Boca High and I took many AP and AICE classes which allowed me to get college credit and not have to take as many of the general classes freshman year. Some tips would be to use your freshman year to really be proactive in finding a major you are passionate about. College is about exploring all the possible options for your future so don't take that lightly. Get involved early and be proactive.

6. How long was your graduate program?

In my junior year of college, I applied to a combined degree program in Information Systems and Operations Management, which allowed me to take some master's classes while still pursuing my undergraduate degree. So, my graduate program is a 2-year program, however, with the combined degree I completed one year during my undergraduate career so when I graduated with Finance in Fall 2018 I only had one year remaining leading me to graduate this Fall 2019.

7. What is grad school like? Any tips for scholars in grad school?

For my program, my graduate school was very teamwork-based, which has pros and cons to it. It exposed me to meeting many new people, many international students, older students, etc and also finding ways for conflict resolution. Overall, graduate school requires more commitment when it comes to studying. My classes were modular, which means that in one semester I went through two modules (one module is an 8-week period). This was very fast-paced and allowed me to focus intensely on a course in a shorter period, meaning constantly keeping up with each class material weekly.

8. What are some of your current goals?

I still have a lot to learn, and I am excited to start my career and be able to learn from finance professionals. Some of my current goals is finding ways to integrate finance and technology, for example, learning how to code using Python, also learning more on data visualization tools.

9. What's been your biggest challenge since graduation?

I won't be moving to Seattle, WA until September 2020 so personally, my biggest challenge is filling my time home in Boca Raton with valuable things to do, especially traveling while I have the chance. The past 4.5 years I haven't really had vacation time because even in the summers I was interning. So really using this time at home to be active, prepare for the move, and traveling.

10. Where do you see yourself in five years?

That's a tough question, I hope I will still be working at Microsoft and be managing a team of my own. I've possibly thought about getting my MBA in the future but I'm not too sure about that yet.

11. What is one thing your mentor or a teacher in college taught you that's come in handy?

Throughout college, I worked as a Fiscal Assistant for the College of Engineering's Integrated Product & Process Design Program (IPPD), which is an innovative educational initiative where Engineering students

work in small multidisciplinary teams under the guidance of faculty coaches and industrial liaison engineers to design and build authentic industrial products/prototypes for sponsor companies. I was responsible for managing the \$2,000 budget for each engineering team to make the prototype. Given my business background yet being constantly surrounded by engineers at work, my boss taught me that not everyone thinks the same way I do and there are many ways to approach a problem. This has helped so much in my internships since I am constantly working with others so I try to put myself in the other person's shoes and look at a problem or situation in a different perspective.

12. If you could change one thing about your master's degree what would it be?

The program is very fast-paced, for example, I learned C# and Java in 8 weeks due to the modular schedule. Sometimes I wish some classes could have been longer so I could have gone more in-depth in certain classes that interested me.

13. What's the most important life skill you learned while in college?

Definitely using your network to your advantage. Networking allows you to meet prospective mentors, friends, and gain access to the necessary resources that will foster your career development.

14. What was the best part of your college experience?

The best part of college for me was the people I met throughout my 4.5 years. From my part-time job in the engineering school, being a teaching assistant, and involvement in various clubs, I've met a variety of people who have taught me different things, given me advice, and have turned into life long friends.

15. What was the most challenging part?

Throughout college, I worked as a Fiscal Assistant for the College of Engineering, so I had to balance my school work, with a job and all my extracurricular activities. The most challenging part was finding a balance that worked for me and knowing what to prioritize.

16. What is something you wish you knew earlier?

College isn't just about getting good grades, it truly is an experience. Academics are important don't get me wrong, but that's only a part of college. Take time to get to know others, especially people in the industry you want to be in, build relationships with professors/mentors. Take advantage of all the connections you make and maintain those connections.

17. Were you part of any clubs/organizations? If so, what was your role in the organization?

Throughout college I was a part of various clubs but the most influential ones were being on the Technology Case Competition and Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA). The Case Competition team allowed me to travel throughout the United States and compete at invitational competitions with other schools where we were given a case study and had to come up with a viable solution and present the solution to a set of executive judges. While ALPFA is a national organization for business professionals and students focused on expanding Latino leadership in the global workforce. This organization really provided me opportunities to network with Fortune 500 companies, provided me 1:1 mentorship, and gave me community service experience.

18. How has the Viner Scholars Foundation impacted your life?

The Viner Foundation has truly changed my life. UF was my dream college, and I knew with two older sisters and a single mom that I needed financial assistance to make that dream a reality. The Viners have supported me not only financially but most importantly professionally, which has allowed me to make the career path I have always wanted.

19. What will your role be in Microsoft when you start working?

I am moving to Microsoft's headquarters (Seattle, WA) in September 2020 to be a Financial Analyst. The program I am joining is Microsoft's Finance Rotation Program (FRP), where over the course of two-years, FRP analysts rotate through four, six-month rotations in order to build strong financial acumen and core business skills to help develop analyst into data-driven and strategic finance leaders.