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## Students' real-world internships

When Lillian Ruiz '08 wakes up in the morning, she's ready to get to work — quite literally.

For the fall semester, Ruiz has left behind textbooks and professors for deadlines and late nights at The ABC News Law and Justice Unit. The division investigates news stories that involve legal issues. Segments she has worked on have appeared on "Nightline" and "20/20."

This fall, Ruiz isn't the only student taking a semester to intern at various companies and non-profits. In past years, students have interned at places such as ESPN and Morgan Stanley, while others have taught English in foreign countries and worked as ski instructors.

Although the Career Resource Center (CRC) could not provide exact figures, it said that the number of students looking into taking a semester off to intern has remained constant in the past few years.

Ruiz did not intend to take the semester off to intern, however. She came across the job while looking for something to do last summer.

"I had been looking for a production internship, so I was looking on the CRC website and I saw the ad for the ABC Law and Justice Unit," she said.

Unfortunately, the ad was outdated and Ruiz had applied too late to get the job for the summer. The reviewers were impressed with her application, however, and they offered her the internship during the fall.

At first, Ruiz didn't think taking the semester off to work would be a possibility, but she soon realized that it was an opportunity to seize.

According to Mike Sciola, director of the Career Resource Center, students opt to take the semester off to intern for a variety of reasons. Many hope to connect their academic concentrations with career ambition to get hands-on experience.

Mike Replier '08 decided to take the semester off to intern partially because he wanted a break from college life.

"By the spring semester of my sophomore year, I was feeling stifled by both my academic and social lives at Wesleyan," he said.

Replier is now working in the Series Development department at MTV.

"My job, at the moment, is essentially to help with whatever has to get done on the administrative side of developing the top-rated shows for the MTV network," he said. "However, I do get to do a significant amount of writing, which was my interest when I applied for the internship."

This week, Replier wrote the cast bios for the upcoming "Real World: Denver."

"Day-to-day, it's definitely not a glamorous gig, but I'm enjoying all the experience and great connections I'm gaining from working for free," Replier said.

Ruiz is also enjoying the hands-on experience her internship is providing her. She got to sit in on ABC's interview with Pervez Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, and then help edit the footage.

"I definitely love this internship," she said. "I've been able to work on a lot of big stories with big producers."

As much as she likes her internship, though, Ruiz misses being a student.

"I do miss having books and learning as opposed to doing," she said. "At school, you have a guiding hand. At work, you get to venture out and rely on yourself."

According to Ruiz, the workload is heavy.

"I gripe and moan when I come into the office at eight in the morning and leave at nine at night, but I wouldn't stay as long as I do if I didn't love what I'm doing," Ruiz said.

Replier is just as busy. Unlike Ruiz, who had credits to spare and won't have to worry about making up too many classes when she returns, Replier needed a substitute for the missed semester. So, in addition to his internship, Replier is taking courses at New York University's McGhee School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

Although neither Ruiz nor Replier had planned to take a semester off to intern, the CRC does offer many resources for students considering such opportunities.

The University is one of the founding members of the College Venture Consortium, a group of 10 schools that came together over 30 years ago to pool resources and develop opportunities specifically for students looking into taking a leave from school. The consortium offers students a database of unique paid and unpaid opportunities that are not typically available to undergraduates without a bachelor's degree.

"For some students, taking a semester off is exactly the right thing to do," Sciola said. "They come back to campus energized and focused and are much more successful academically because they have this great experience to bring back to the classroom and can share real examples from their time away."

When Ruiz and Replier return to campus, they will undoubtedly bring back and share the real-world skills and experience they gained from their off-campus adventures.

"I'm very lucky to have had so many great experiences so far," Ruiz said.