

Dana: Hi, my name is Dr. Dana Hebreard, Grand Valley State University. I'm here today with my friends from one of the founding partners of the Laker Accelerated Talent Program. We're going to spend a few minutes learning about lessons learned from HR and student perspectives in our inaugural year.

Jenna: Hi, I'm Jenna. In April 2024, I graduated with a finance marketing major as well as certificates in real estate and project management. I interned at Acrisure through the Talent Link program and I've also continued my career as my first full-time position in HR as an HR associate.

Cecilia: Hi, I'm Cecilia. I'm from Michigan and I just graduated with Jenna in 2024. I am from Greenville, MI. I ended my college career with my undergraduate major with English and minor writing and then also project management. I interned for project management, but currently I'm preparing to go and do a year with the orthodox volunteer core which is similar to AmeriCorp.

Chris: My name is Chris and I grew up in Hartland, Michigan, then went to Saginaw Valley State University where I graduated with a communication degree in 2016. From there I moved out to the west side of the state in 2020 and 2022 I'm currently one of the associate managers in human resources at Acrisure.

Dana: Jenna and Cecilia, one of the reasons I wanted to speak with you is because you took initiative to create your own projects as interns and I wanted to get your perspective on what you would recommend to students who are entering their first internship or full-time position.

Jenna: For myself being in the same boat kind of really getting into my first real job I guess after my internship is just gonna have to head into your career. Initially I was kind of questioning if I should apply for the programs to begin with I thought it was definitely an interesting way to get into work and start an internship especially at a company such as that is growing so I really thought it would be a good idea to join the program. So my first move was just myself and Cecilia and I kind of jumped on board and it was great to have such an awesome first cohort as well. Yeah really put yourself out there and make all the connections that you can to start out.

Cecilia: Internship for transitioning from liberal arts education to corporate position, the question in my head was how do I be useful? And they offered that program and project management certificate and then when I actually started my internship you know I'm being an intern you're thinking how do I be useful and how do I show that I can offer value to the goal to get a job at the end so and that really was kind of Jenna and I both kind of looked to be helpful and gain experience.

Chris: A lot of the students they came in without a real clear direction they really wanted to take their degree or something different but even both of you Conversation Responsibilities I'm hoping over into that corporate setting but not really knowing what that looks like but having some of that different direction and some of that had to find interest going into those conversations if you were the boss In a little bit Graduation.

Cecelia: Oh for sure I mean when I remember our phone interview and I brought up the English degree I have technically English so the metrics of teaching and everything but what you wanted to talk about a lot I facilitated this workshop I've done this initiative organization As a recruiter like Shakespeare Respect.

Chris: You are spot on. Internship positions people are joining in with pro experience most of the time so some of these experiences or affiliations be relevant again translate over into that corporate setting that you mentioned

Jenna: I remember you tell me about a project that you worked on and I was like oh man like I'm just starting out in my project management workload right now I haven't even joined any classes yet and I was kind of like thrown back for a bit but then you know once you really started to think about your experiences and especially when you're trying to promote yourself to a recruiter and really sell why you would be a good individual for the position you know it's not necessarily always about your classes I mean that is obviously such a huge component of your learning in your education but you also have to look outside and see what you've done done as an individual and you know maybe in your past experiences or your past internship your past job I mean I talked a lot about My time as a server when you know I'm connecting with different recruiters are hiring because I feel like that is you know kind of huge and shows who I am as an individual and what skills I can bring to the table rather than you know I did take this class but maybe that doesn't necessarily connect on that level that my past experiences and skills would have.

Chris: Hit the nail on the head. Does And understand that I'm gonna be able to come in I'm gonna have to learn a lot I'm excited to do that so being able to be I'm sure you know Environment Coming A little bit of retirement leadership level and stability from both of you and a few other of our came and took ownership of the internship is kind of reality it came down to the points that we needed to address as organization Your internship project and along with one of the other project we sat down and we went over that project afterwards and I know that we're gonna be Program Incredible that I'm really thankful to leverage Great experience being and being willing to jump and be part of never change landscape you'll be able to think is pretty.

Cecelia: Specific but I was surprised when we met and I kind of took out more details So surprised at how many yeses we got Amazing Creativity also open minded adaptability OK Appreciate Always always look for people with that Sense of ownership as well as not being completely bigger of a project of an initiative process something that could be improved that's ultimately what both of you dead kind of came in took it you had ownership of it and then made it a lot better as well well being able to highlight those different opportunities different projects when you're server different experiences as well those are all great things that I think any environment too.

Jenna: For me and I mean I'm sure Celia as well as just having the initiative to be curious and really get your hands on as much as you possibly can and want to learn that's the biggest thing

that I think really made me successful in my role as an intern was just the fact that I wanted to learn as much as I possibly could. I didn't soak up as much information about the organization about the job about the career path that it really could take me on and yeah that's just my biggest piece of advice really just go out there and get your hands on as much as you can you know maybe sometimes you might be playing in the dirt a little bit but you have an opportunity to make something you know great and really just in your role and don't don't be afraid because you're speaking you mean OK maybe someone like Chris recruiter now now I've gotten to know Chris and I'm pretty good friends with them and I really appreciate that component of being able to expand my network and go out there and talk to different people and these are the experiences and where they've taken me so yeah just don't don't be afraid be willing to reach out and talk to new people and get your hands dirty.

Dana: And I love what you said Jenna about curiosity because I'm seeing some trends right curiosity adaptability innovation that willing list to get your hands dirty and a lot of that also align with the mission of you know if you look at Acrisure mission if you look at other organizational missions they're looking for that curious mindset and and so Chris has a recruiter how would you articulate or encourage someone who is in that Exploration phase sort of align their goals with the work of an organization.

Chris: Absolutely. With his internship program I think that's gonna be the first step with a lot of the students that I speak to are had an incredible spot with starting their careers and being able to have some these first steps professionally going into corporate organizations being able to come in and say this is the schooling that I've done here from the classes that I've completed. Specific project that managed completion being able to into the position that you're applying to I'm sure all of a sudden you hear no job descriptions a lot of them are just different points of responsibilities and requirements a lot of their are are pretty there's a few very specific things that we generally look for and every description but a lot of them are gonna be focused on those soft skills so someone coming in that is looking to get their toes into a couple different areas or doesn't really know where they want to begin but understand that that's the next stage after school they don't wanna go towards him Graduate program or continue education from there come in. And explain what you're looking to apply Throughout higher education corporate environment.

Curiosity Participants Mean Liberal arts and things like that you have to admit you don't know something to be curious and I was very out of it with my supervisor going into one project management and you know project management I don't know how done I don't know vocabulary I don't know or ITI had to be curious Routine Leap You're kind of forced curious Just thinking about the one activity that said it was the funky Buddha hot yoga funky Buddha Next-door Passes Jenna talent and it was very interesting it was and then we did another one a couple months later employee appreciation month and

Jenna: We played at one of our meetings with all the interns that was always so fun to see what Always Of an organization and so as a new employee whether it's an internship or a new professional or a professional

Dana: Having to adapt understand that culture and identity of the organization and kind of wellHow do I show up at work and you wanna show your authentic but you want to know everyone around you and how they function as well and that's not just like Microsoft teams or you know different platform showing up but it's showing up as your person tooHow do you come into a project.

Chris: OrganizationSeem like a lot might be a little bitActual cultureI've got older and older and more involved professionalWhereOf the floorJennaVolunteeredReallyIt was really cool cause there was employeesCommunityBig for me with other companies with how much they invested in the community.

Cecelia: They take care of their employees at Acrisure. I was so excited for this program and to be able to kind of foster and build a local pipeline of students that wanna that are already going to school here a lot of a lot of them are from the area but might not be familiar with the types of local opportunities around here so this program I know one of the handful of organizations that were part of it I know that the program is continue organizations from what I've heard.

Dana: Thank you for being here and chatting. Are there any final thoughts that you would want to share?

Cecelia: This was my first corporate job and I was really unsure. By the end, I felt valued and needed. Learn how to connect with new teammates and get involved deeper into a corporate position. It was hard at first, but I eventually got a handle on it.

Jenna: As Cecilia said, you know you kinda have to take that dive of the unknowingness and you know at first I was like oh man I don't know. A job after all this I have to work and you have to put in for it but it will indeed pay off in the end and I am so happy to be where I'm at right now with Acrisure that's awesome.

Dana: Thank you for being here and the listeners for taking the time to be with us and if you're interested in learning more about talent link or experiential learning at Grand Valley State University please check out our website at [GVSU.edu/ccel](https://www.gvsu.edu/ccel).