

Natalie Mecklenburg

Kristen Smith

Internship 4B

30 August 2024

Pre-Internship Reflection

What I want to be when I grow up has been a question asked ever since the first grade. My answers have varied from a teacher to an astronaut. Last year, I finally realized that I wanted to go into the healthcare field, so I applied for an internship at the end of junior year hoping to make my career aspirations clearer. In the summer, as I began looking for an internship, I also was completing MedEx Academy, a summer internship made to learn more about various healthcare jobs. It was here where my aspirations to work in healthcare became clear, and I knew I wanted to pursue a career in physical therapy.

My internship search began with the help of our career coordinator, Mrs. Shew. I told her my interests in physical therapy and psychology and she guided me towards New Horizons, a health center, and Hanger Clinic, a prosthetic and orthotic clinic. I took these recommendations with a grain of salt, thinking I wanted to just intern at a regular physical therapy practice. From there, I reached out to ATP physical therapy and Hanger Clinic. I received offers from both, and ultimately picked Hanger. I knew that ATP would be a simpler, more straightforward choice to learn about physical therapy, but I wanted to challenge myself and learn about something I knew nothing about. I do not regret this choice at all, and I am very excited to start. I am unfamiliar with prosthetics and am beyond excited to learn more about it. I can't wait to be in a clinical environment, meet patients, and find out what a certified prosthetist does in a day. I want to be able to use this experience as a learning opportunity to see if this could be the career for me.

Before my internship began, I thought about the main goal I wanted to accomplish. This goal was to gain experience and awareness in the field of prosthetics, learn more about patient care and treatment, and gain a deeper understanding of how the healthcare system works, all fundamental skills for any healthcare career. More specifically, in order to gain these skills, I want to complete over 60 hours at Hanger Clinic under the mentorship of Ms. Emily Boyd by February 2025. A considerable part of ensuring I complete my goal is measuring my progress. Because of this, I have made it a priority to document my time log accurately and promptly. I have also made a set schedule for my internship to guarantee I will be getting weekly hours. Monthly meetings with Ms. Smith will also be a way to measure my goals. At these conferences, I will be able to evaluate my progress and set smaller SMART goals as I continue in my internship. These smaller goals help my large goal by making it more manageable, analyzing my overarching goal and seeing if I need to adjust it, and demonstrating my growth throughout the process. Despite not knowing the first thing about prosthetics, I know this goal is achievable due to my motivation and skill set. My motivation to learn and make use of my time at my internship will be a driving force in completing my hour goal. During my internship this summer, my time management skills immensely improved. The hours were 8am-5pm, so I balanced working during the day, doing work for my internship at night, and achieving an A in my summer college class I was taking at the time. This summer honed my time management skills, which will prove to be very helpful as I balance school, the college process, a fall sport, and my internship all at once. My goal is relevant because I will be learning skills vital to any healthcare career. Shadowing a clinician who works directly with patients every day will expose me to the reality of healthcare. It is here where I will take my first steps to learn how to treat patients, learn how to be sensitive and aware with patients, and understand the life of a healthcare worker. Even if my

internship ends up diverting me from going into healthcare, it will still be a valuable experience and relevant to discovering the career right for me. My goal is timely because I have taken steps to ensure I get my hours done. My mentor and I have discussed both of our schedules and cultivated a plan on what days I can come in, backup days, and days I can shadow and interview other clinicians. This set plan will ensure that I have plenty of opportunities each week to achieve my goal of completing more than 60 hours by February 2025 while also balancing school and other commitments.

Employability skills are vital skills needed to make an employee impactful, efficient, and successful in almost any job. After reading the article on employability skills, I analyzed my own skills and reflected on how they impact me currently and their impact in my future. Despite my skills improving throughout high school as I managed working, college classes, sports, and constant transitions, there are employability skills I still need to improve. These five skills I hope to improve in my internship are my goal-making, initiative, verbal communication, citation, and curiosity skills.

One skill I struggle with is goal-making. More specifically, I usually struggle with making goals so hard they are unachievable, or too easy they don't challenge me at all. In order for me to grow during my internship, my goals must be balanced. One goal I have during my internship is to see Ms. Emily Boyd's day in the life. While this is a good start, I have to remember the SMART goal's aspects and add to my original goal. Adding more specifics, time checkpoints, and making sure it's achievable, but still challenging, will level up my goal-making and therefore, help me advance. I will know this skill has improved when adding SMART aspects to my goals becomes second nature.

Another skill I find difficult is initiative. Taking that first step, especially if it is a risk, has always been hard for me. Applying for an internship and reaching out to mentors seemed daunting at first, but eventually, when I took the risk, it paid off. This is why initiative is so important. It leads to opportunities and new learning experiences. In my internship, I want to grow this skill by challenging myself out of my comfort zone. I want to make the most of my internship, and I know I can do that by meeting new people. This might seem scary at first, but I know that getting to know my mentor, other clinicians, and patients will pay off in the end and improve my experience and initiative skills. I know this skill has grown when I am not afraid to take the first. I will be able to recognize the payoff of a scary task and do it despite my fears.

Going hand and hand with the last skill, my verbal communication skills are another skill I want to improve. In school, I often find myself intimidated by talking in front of large groups or presenting in class. This leads to me getting anxious, my thoughts getting jumbled, and my words not accurately representing my thoughts. I know communication is an important skill for college and my future career, so this is vital for me to improve. A way I can refine this skill through my internship is by talking to patients. A main part of being a healthcare worker is making sure patients understand what you are doing. I hope I have chances to talk with patients, become comfortable with them, and communicate information effectively to them. This skill is one that I can discuss, get feedback, and track progress during my mentor evaluations. I can bring up the fact that I want to expand this skill, and Ms. Boyd can help guide me to mastery.

Next is the skill of citations. This seems like an unimportant skill to have, but knowing how to cite properly has many benefits, especially when writing bibliographies for my internship. In past classes, I have always struggled with different formats and requirements of citations. I am currently taking English 101 at the college, and I hope that this class will help me

improve my citations. I am not sure of the importance of citing in the physical therapy field, but honing these skills will be helpful as I enter college and possibly complete research in further schooling. I know this skill has improved when I feel confident in citing sources, even in different formats. I hope by my last bibliography, I will be able to do it with little to no guidance.

The final skill is creativity. I struggle with creativity when it comes to thinking of multiple ways to do something. My brain gets stuck on one way to complete a task and then struggles to think of other ways. Especially in the prosthetic field, new devices and treatments are always evolving. As a healthcare worker, you must look at a patient and devise a personal treatment; it is not one size fits all. I hope that in my internship, shadowing Ms. Boyd will help me see how her mindset works. Being around someone who has to analyze a patient and come up with a treatment can help me grow my creativity. As this skill grows, I will see an overall change in my mindset and how I analyze different situations. I hope as I finish my internship, I will be able to look back on my mindset now, and see how my way of thinking has become more open. With all of my employability skills, I will make it a priority to reflect on them during my monthly conferences and reflection. This way, I will be able to track my progress and feelings about each skill every month.

In conclusion, this internship will make me a more dynamic, experienced, and new person. It will teach me invaluable lessons and new experiences I couldn't have gained without it. I chose this internship to step out of my comfort zone, have different experiences, and learn about a field I haven't considered. I am so excited to take this risk and explore this new field as I explore things myself as well. However, I do recognize that sometimes goals and plans don't work out. I am ready for what comes my way because I know this entire experience is preparing me for my future, where unexpected things do happen. I am ready to take accountability and

adjust my goals as needed. I know that sometimes rejection is redirection, so if a goal or my experience doesn't go the way I hoped it would, I am still learning from it. Overall, I am so excited to start my internship and watch myself grow throughout this experience.