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Margolis Reflection Blog

Before looking for an internship this summer, I felt that somehow, as a junior in college, I was already too late to pursue an interest I hadn't already discovered. At Duke it seems like everyone starts working on their careers before they even get here, and I was worried I didn't have enough background in one subject area to be hired for anything after undergrad. This limited me to some subjects I wasn't all that interested in anymore. I felt stuck.

On a whim, I was taking a health policy course and found my interest sparked. I felt motivated by the clear need for better health care policies and liked being challenged by the complexities that seem unsolvable: what kind of health care system is the best? What's more important: cost, quality, or access? Not to mention, it's a field where people are actually testing out new ideas. I had explored other policy fields in the past and was most frustrated by the fact that so many policy fields had endless literature on options for reform, but few were ever tried (i.e. education). Instead, the healthcare sector tries to be better every day.

That's what drew me to Margolis in the first place. It's different from other research institutes that seem to collect data and publish papers, but never move outside of the theoretical realm. Margolis does not treat the world like a petri dish: when coworkers talk about their projects, they are actually implementing their ideas and seeing what happens. When they ask for advice, they're not just talking about paper formatting or research methods: they want to improve their relationships with community partners, to make sure they're doing their work as ethically as possible. I haven't found any other company where each individual strives to work as ethically as they do at Margolis.

I wanted this job in particular to learn more about what a Research Assistant position would look like, but I came away with so much more insight on what I want out of a job. This internship solidified what I want to find in an office culture, what kind of feedback I want from a supervisor, and the level of team-based work I look for. It was difficult for me to work remotely, which only reinforced my knowledge that I like to collaborate with a team. I learned that I value the relevance of my actual work to my team higher than I initially thought, instead of solely considering the mission of the company. While the notion of my project was quite noble (how to reduce racial health disparities), I found my day-to-day work of reading law articles very unrewarding. It was enough to help me realize how stimulated I am by social interactions and peer accountability.

I am very grateful to have had this experience. It gave me a lot to think about for my upcoming job search. I also began working on the lifelong skill of being able to motivate oneself to work without pressing deadlines. And in the end, as I worked on my concluding poster, I was really

proud as I realized how much I accomplished. I hope that someday that work materializes into relevant policy.