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## Finding Balance

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# Finding balance

Tylor Edison '14 has a head for numbers and a heart for service.

So when an opportunity arose for the accounting major to intern with a nonprofit in Haiti, he jumped at the chance.

Edison spent last summer completing an internship with Extollo International, a nonprofit that focuses on construction of homes and vocational training. The group is teaching local Haitians construction skills while building a children's village for 70 orphans on the island of La Gonave.

The experience was the perfect blend of service and accounting for Edison, who has longed to do mission work and improve the lives of others, but also wanted an experience that included his intended profession.

"This was the icing on the cake for me," said Edison, an accounting tutor and resident advisor at Linfield. "Not only did I get to do accounting work, but I got to help with a cause I really believe in and think is worthwhile. What I liked best is that the Haitian workers learn skills they need to create a better life for themselves."

Local Haitians work side-by-side with trained carpenters, learning masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electricity and construction management. During the eight-week internship, Edison was responsible for tracking the expenses of the Haiti operation.

That included daily reconciliations of the cash account, recording expenses, organizing purchases and meetings, and helping to allocate materials to specific building projects.

"It's difficult, because everything in Haiti operates on cash," said Edison, who learned to barter and was introduced to Creole, the Haitian language. He kept a journal of terminology to help him communicate. "The majority of Haitian businesses don't give receipts, so there's a lot of opportunity to miss things if you're not careful."

When his daily book work was

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completed, Edison often helped with construction, carrying mortar and digging ditches. The internship was unpaid, but Edison was given free room and board, and he earned college credit through Linfield's Office of Career Development. What's more, he said the experience reinforced the importance of cultural understanding.

"When you travel, you understand that people live differently, and they have different expectations and different behaviors," he said. "We live in a globalized world, and it's important to understand this to be successful."

Mike Jones, professor of accounting and Edison's advisor, called Edison a top level student.

"He's very comfortable talking with people outside his peer group, and that's a strength that will take him a long way in this world," Jones said. "Students who have completed internships have this real-world experience that adds to the class and makes their questions more interesting. When they graduate and start work, they have experience. It's a benefit for the classroom, it's a benefit for the students, and it's a benefit for the firms."

According to Jones, many Linfield accounting students participate in internships. As a result, the majority are placed in jobs before they graduate, and all are employed within six months of graduation.



Tylor Edison '14 combined his interests in accounting and community service during an internship with Extollo International in Haiti last summer. "Internships are a good way to understand what your goals are and what you want to do with your future," said Edison.

This summer, Edison will intern at PricewaterhouseCoopers, a big-four accounting firm in Portland, and hopes to eventually work for an organization with the opportunity to live and work abroad. 🍷

—Laura Davis