



2011 Summer & Fall Schedule

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Internships at LANL a golden opportunity for UNM-LA students

Both Austin Brown and Joel Runnels are future engineers and both are highly successful UNM-LA students with internships at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). But while Runnels is a college freshman, just out of high school, Brown is a 26 year old father who tried other career paths before settling on engineering.



Austin Brown

"I absolutely love it at UNM-LA," said Brown. "The classes are great. UNM-LA is the nearest thing to an engineering school, and now with the internship, I'm working with a LANL engineer on his projects. I go from the classroom to working with my mentor and having him explain how things truly apply. Most students are just in the classroom. I'm learning it firsthand."

Runnels agreed that the combination of practical experience and classroom learning make UNM-LA a great place for a future engineer.

"It's an amazing opportunity," he said. "I don't see why anyone in engineering would want to go anywhere else. Working at one of the top scientific laboratories in the world is a unique opportunity and my teachers are comparable to the faculty anywhere in the US. A lot of them are practicing professionals and teaching is their focus. You can tell they enjoy teaching and they really care about their students."

Both Brown and Runnels are full-time students. Internships are tailored to the needs of the student and the needs of the LANL mentor. Brown works 30 hours a week

"I get a lot of help from my family and from my instructors," he said.

Runnels is working 10 hours a week for now. He plans to work more hours this summer.

"Getting to work at LANL during the year as well as in the summer is wonderful. You can really get into a project and just keep going," said Runnels. "My mentor, Murray Moore, is really great and I'm planning to keep working with him next year."



Joel Runnels

Runnels is working on a project in radiation measurement and protection. It involves computer modeling, then moving beyond the theoretical to building mechanical devices.

"I like seeing how the theory works in the real world," Runnels said. "It's great to see your ideas take shape in real life."

Brown and Runnels said UNM-LA's small classes are a big asset to their education. Small classes also mean students get to know each other well.

"I'm part of a cohort of engineering students that get together and decides what classes we want to take each semester. We form study groups too. All of us making it through together is the ultimate goal," Brown said.

Runnels and Brown both plan to stay at UNM-LA once they have their associate's degrees in pre-engineering. The UNM-LA Bachelor and Graduate Program through Extended University makes it possible to get a bachelor's degree with minimal commuting, Brown pointed out. Both students hope to keep working as LANL interns as they pursue their educational goals.

It's not just future engineers who become LANL interns. Three students in UNM-LA's Applied Technologies Program will be starting internships this summer. All of them are excited to be putting their classroom knowledge to work in a real-world setting.



Summer Trancosa

Shalynn (Summer) Trancosa has chosen Solar Technology as her area of concentration in the program. She is in her second semester at UNM-LA. This summer she'll be working for LANL in her area of interest. She's already gained experience setting up solar panels in her Photovoltaics class this semester.

"I think solar technology is going to be huge," she said. "People want to become more 'green'."

Trancosa's family is going to use her expertise on the house they are building at San Felipe Pueblo.

"I want to get a job in my field when I'm done with the program as well as continue my education, probably in something technical," she said.

Trancosa said she was enjoying the Applied Technologies program, both the hands-on classes like welding and the more academic course work.

"It's cool to be learning all these new things," she said.

Anthony Magdalena is also in his second semester in the Applied Technologies Program. His concentration is Nanotechnology.

"I talked to some of the folks at the lab who work in nano and I decided it would be a good fit for me," he said.

James Maxwell, Magdalena's instructor for Introduction to Nanotechnology, will be involved with his upcoming LANL internship. Magdalena can't wait to put what he's learned in class to work during the internship.

"In this program, there's a very dedicated team trying to help you accomplish your goals," Magdalena said. "At a small school like UNM-LA, you get a lot of help."

Magdalena's ultimate goal is a Ph.D., probably in something involving nanotechnology. "It might be microbiology," he



Anthony Magdalena

said. "Medical research really interests me."

Fatima Pino is also looking forward to an internship in nanotechnology. She'll be working for CINT, the Center for Integrated Nanotechnology in Albuquerque this summer. CINT is an off-site LANL facility. She is in her second year at UNM-LA.

"Nanotechnology first attracted me because I liked the idea of working with really small things. I've learned that there's an incredible variety of career paths open to me in nanotechnology," she said.

"The one-on-one communication with the professors is my favorite thing about the Applied Technologies Program," said Pino.

At first, things like welding and drafting were a bit intimidating, Pino said, but she got over that quickly. Now she likes talking about these subjects with her two brothers who are electricians.



Fatima Pino

"It's fun when you do the 'guy' stuff," she said. "You find out, 'I can do it too'."

UNM-LA works closely with LANL staff to find interns with the experience and interests they need, said Dr. Oksana Gerlits, Curriculum Coordinator for Science. LANL internships are all paid employment. The number of hours vary. Twenty hours is the most common, Gerlits said.

How are students chosen for internships?

"Work hard in your classes and talk to your instructors," suggested Gerlits. "Many of our instructors are LANL employees and they have contacts there."

"We obtain a resume from students and circulate it among our faculty and other contacts," Gerlits said. UNM-LA staff also finds internships directly, she said.

To learn more about engineering and science programs at UNM-LA, call Dr. Gerlits at (505) 662-5919 ext. 603. To learn about the Applied Technologies Program, call Dr. Irina Alvestad at (505) 6625919 ext. 679. Visit www.la.unm.edu to learn about these and other programs at UNM-LA.