



Next Steps at Vanderbilt University

AN INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

February 2024 Newsletter

Expanding Arts Internship Opportunities

Emily Barker, Program Coordinator of Career Development

The beginning of the semester is always exciting, especially when students start their internships. We consistently have students express interest in working in creative spaces, and we are so excited when we find the perfect fit for a student! This semester, we are partnering with several arts and creative partners, such as the Nashville Children's Theatre, National Songwriter's Association International, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, Belmont Mansion, Smart Art & Craft Supplies, and Vanderbilt Theatre Scene Shop.

Hannah, Class of 2024, is interning at two of these sites, the Nashville Children's Theatre (NCT) and the National Songwriter's Association International (NSAI). At NCT, Hannah splits her time between the Education and Front of House teams. Hannah has had a lot of experience working with young children and is excited to get to combine her love of the arts with working with kids at NCT. With the Education team, she completes admin tasks such as setting up for classes, preparing supplies, and sorting materials. On her front of house days, she serves as an usher. She gets students off buses, welcomes them, and shows them where to sit in the theater. At NSAI, she helps with workshops, prepares for special events, and works with the Membership team to create community, resources for growth, and opportunities for songwriters in the Nashville area and across the globe.

Lucy, Class of 2024, is also interning at two of these sites, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage and Belmont Mansion. She works primarily with the Guest Services team at the Hermitage and is learning how to answer questions, give suggestions, and share history about the site. At Belmont Mansion, she is working as a Historical Interpreter. She is learning the history of the Mansion and its residents, sharing that information with guests, and answering questions they might have. Throughout her time in Next Steps, Lucy has taken many history classes, which have specifically helped her when sharing history at both internship sites.

Annabel, Class of 2024, is interning at Smart Art & Craft Supplies. This is her second semester interning here, and she is excited to continue working there. She works at the register, processes and organizes donations, stocks the sales floor, plans and coordinates art demos, and generally provides quality customer service. Malik, Class of 2026, is interning at the Vanderbilt Theatre Scene Shop. He helps build the sets for each theatre production. He is enjoying learning to use different tools and be creative in his daily work.

We are excited to see that the arts sector is becoming more inclusive. These environments help students grow in their creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, and much more. We look forward to seeing all that our students accomplish and learn at their internships this semester.





Ambassa'Dore Highlight - Meet Emily!

Cat Bernstein, Office Assistant, Next Steps at Vanderbilt Alumni Class of '15

Emily Gillett is from Walnut Creek, CA. She became involved with Next Steps in her freshman year when she was a job coach. Emily has been an ambassa'dore every semester since. Her favorite part about being an ambassa'dore is making friends and going to fun circle events. Emily has been involved in Next Steps all four years. Emily likes to spend time with her family, and friends, play board games, exercise, and cook for fun. Being an ambassa'dore has allowed her to see the benefits of inclusive higher education and make lifelong friends.

Alumni Highlight - Meet Nick Villarreal!

Steven Greiner, Alumni Coordinator & Recruitment Assistant,
Next Steps at Vanderbilt, Class of '12

Meet Nick Villarreal, Class of 2016! In the summer, Nicks works at South Padre Island Beach Park as a "Greeter" on Saturdays and Sundays, even on holidays and busy days. He loves talking to co-workers and meeting people at the Beach Park.

He also goes to Big HEROES school three days a week. It's a special education program for high school grads where he learns new job skills and practices social and independent living skills on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Volunteering at Sea Turtle, Inc in South Padre Island is another thing he enjoys. They rescue and help injured turtles.

Right now, he lives with his dad in Brownsville, Texas, and even though he's independent, he's okay sharing a 3-bedroom home with his dad.

The Next Steps program means a lot to him. He loved the good times with classmates and misses the fun with the Ambassadors. For fun, he likes finding seashells on the beach, watching movies, and listening to music.

His advice to other Next Steps students is to enjoy each day and learn as much as they can. After finishing the program, he suggests looking back at the cool things they did and learned.



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