

From: Allison Christie  
To: Gaylan Rockswold  
Subject: St. Olaf student internship

Dear Dr. Rockswold,

I recently read the article in the St. Olaf Magazine about the medical internship you created and piloted last summer and it inspired me to send you a thank you note. I'm not sure if you remember me, but you created a similar internship for me during the summer of 1993 after my sophomore year at St. Olaf. I spent part of my time working in Dr. Sutton's lab on various research projects and the rest shadowing you, Dr. Bergman and the neurosurgery residents.

After I saw the article, I dug through some folders and found my journal from that summer. Reading it brought back many memories, some of which had begun to fade, and others that have always been crystal clear. But the thing that struck me the most was how much that summer influenced my future career path. The exposure you gave me clearly provided a framework for me to explore thoughts about my future as I wrote extensively about my thoughts on going to medical school, being a doctor, balancing a family life with a career in medicine, etc. Looking back at those writings now I am amazed by how much insight I gained from my experiences that summer. Many of my current feelings about the same topics have changed very little since they were shaped twenty years ago.

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After graduating from St. Olaf in 1996 I completed a Surgical Technologist program in Seattle and worked as a scrub tech at Seattle's Swedish Hospital, where I scrubbed primarily neuro cases. Some time during those years I realized the task of digging through clots to find a missing patty was more an unpleasantry than a big honor, but I'll still always fondly remember the first time I did it.

I ultimately continued on and graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine in 2003. During my neuro course in medical school I actually used the notes I made preparing for the mini lectures you gave me and my morning resident conference talk on Cushing Syndrome to study from. I completed my residency in anesthesiology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester in 2008.

I now practice in a small mountain town in Colorado near Aspen and absolutely love being an anesthesiologist. Despite being a town of 10,000 people and having a hospital with only 4 ORs, we have 2 neurosurgeons on our medical staff so I continue to see things on occasion that remind me of my summer at HCMC.

Everyone I interacted with that summer truly treated me as though I were a member of their team. Even the residents, from chiefs to interns, who I now realize were working harder than I could imagine at the time, took time to teach me, talk to me, and include me. Thank you for setting an example that encouraged them to be so generous during a challenging rotation.

I hope many other St. Olaf students are able to benefit as much as I did from your program. And I most sincerely thank you for the very important role you played in my life.

Allison (Annis) Christie