This summer I had the privilege of working at USAA in the audit department as an intern, in their home office in San Antonio, TX. As a whole, this experience was one of the best personal developing events in my time at college, and has taught me an immense amount about the business world, as well as myself personally. USAA provided roughly 300 interns an experience that helped them gauge which business sector they would like to work in for their future career paths. The different sectors throughout USAA, including audit, IT, Human Resources, etc., help provide many different experiences through one major company. The audit department consisted of twelve interns, and was one of the most revolutionizing intern groups throughout the enterprise. All of the work provided to us by USAA is where we gained the most experience, and the daily routine of working in corporate America was outlined by the professionals who assisted us in accomplishing the goals set up by USAA as a whole.

Throughout the summer, we were blessed with having wonderful experiences with professionals from the all over USAA, and even have access to executives throughout the enterprise. The Chief Audit Executive, Mark Howard, was very influential when it came to growing us as young professionals, along with the help from Lorie Winkler and Sue Huggler, our internship directors. They provided us with Patio Chats, which are informal meetings with executives throughout the company, who ate breakfast with us and gave us insight into how to be successful, and how they got to where they are now. We also had the opportunity to listen to chief executives brief us on how to be excellent in every aspect of our careers, and to better ourselves as young professionals. These briefings were intermingled with the audit department mentorship program, in which we were individually paired with an audit professional, and they
met with us on a weekly basis to ensure that we were gaining what we wanted out of the internship. These many opportunities were also paired with fun company events, such as department picnics, sporting events, and just mingling with interns throughout the enterprise as a whole in order to get an understanding of what every sector does respectively.

In order to summarize the events that were provided to the interns, and the teaching done by the company, it would be best to describe the ways in which they grew us into the young professionals that we have become. In the audit department, it was stated from day one that we were being brought in to work as actual auditors, and were expected to work as diligently as a full time employee. This resonated with all twelve of us because it created a sense of personal responsibility, and we understood that the company was relying on us to get the yearly numbers where they need to be. In the audit department, there are executives heading each business sector, such as IT/Security or the Member Experience, with teams setup below each executive. An audit director is then placed to head each team, and the interns were treated as a member of one of the teams under a different sector. I was placed on the IT/Security team, which made me responsible for auditing the IT side of the company. I had no background in this area, which made it very intriguing, and I ultimately learned skills from this side of the business that I will use in my future career. I had a team member who was another intern, but we worked on separate audits because of the sheer amount of audits that needed to be completed in order to stay on track for the annual audit report. We were given individual responsibilities, and were entrusted with accomplishing the work necessary to complete are sections of the audits, which created a strong sense of collaboration with the audit professionals, as well as the fellow interns. With this structure, the responsibilities placed on each of us were what created the strong sense of success when it came to accomplishing the tasks we were given.
Each audit team was given tasks in different stages of the audit, which made it interesting to see how each section is different from the other, but also similar throughout the different sectors of USAA as a whole. My responsibilities were to perform the planning and testing stage of the Identity and Access Management Audit on the IT/Security team for the first six weeks, then perform the testing stage for the Market Compliance Audit on the Member Experience team for the last four weeks. These fields helped me understand what it takes to perform an audit throughout the major phases, and how important it is to be very precise in our findings as to not skew, or make an error in the data. We were entrusted with completing our own workbooks, and placing our findings in the system in which the professionals stored their data, as well as document our findings along with those who were above us in the chain of command. In my humble opinion, the most important responsibility we were given was having meetings with business professionals throughout the enterprise on the audits that we were a part of. I had the opportunity to work with head executives in other departments, and even had plenty of meetings where I was leading and had the responsibility to get the information I required for the results that I needed. My background with my economic classes helped with the understanding of what we needed to accomplish in the different sectors of USAA, and the supply and demand that ultimately result in the success the company has when allocating the focus to the different departments throughout the enterprise, and how each makes the company run as a whole.

The goals that were set for me to experience this summer during my internship were accomplished during my time at USAA. The technical, communication, and professional skills that I learned during my time at USAA are exactly what I was searching to gain as I picked this company to help develop me for the future. My goal of acquiring knowledge about being an auditor were accomplished from day one, when they threw us straight into the mix, and built us
up throughout our time at the company. When comparing the internship to the courses and background that I had through the Agricultural Economic department, I would inquire that I used a mixture of skills learned from all of my classes in order to be successful in the internship. This has also helped me understand what auditing does on a daily basis at USAA, and how my career can be shaped by being a part of the growing department, and use these skills in my future career options. Mark Howard informed us of the importance of internal audit throughout the entire business world, and how individuals with backgrounds in risk management are being pursued in order to direct other sectors throughout these companies, because they understand how the business runs from the inside, and how the risk can be minimalized, and provide better quality results for the customers and employees.

This upcoming semester, I have been approached in order to assist with the recruiting of this upcoming years interns, and to give them my insight and feedback for the program as a whole. If I was asked to describe and persuade anyone to take an offer at USAA, I would hands down tell them to do it in a heartbeat. My suggestions to any of these individuals would to be open about experiencing new things, and to be willing to learn. I was blown away by how much knowledge I was taught within the first week of my internship, and how much of it I actually retained, considering I had never experienced the information I was initially working with. Along with being open, I would advise them to branch out and be willing to take risks during your internship. Don’t be afraid to reach out to the Aggie in the different department for lunch, or ask for help from an audit professional when you are struggling. The assistance that we were given from every aspect from the audit professionals helped me to understand how to improve my results, and consequently, I am very thankful for the time they took out of their days to ensure that we were being successful.
After my great experience with USAA this summer, my outlook on my future has changed for the better. I am now going to pursue grad school post-graduation in order to get my MBA. This will also open doors to gaining certifications, which I was informed are the gateway to promotions, and opening doors further down my career path. I am looking forward to becoming more efficient in Excel, because of the growing use of technology, and having the skills to work more efficiently and faster in the main program used throughout the business world, which will pay great dividends for my future career.

Overall, I am very grateful for the opportunity to intern at USAA this past summer, and gain the professional experience that comes along with the work experience. I have made lifelong friends, mentors, and professional contacts that I will use for many years to come in just ten short weeks. I am looking forward to using the skills I learned this past summer in order to help create a brighter career path for my future endeavors. I would recommend this internship, or company as a whole, to anyone looking to better their professional portfolio, or just better themselves as individuals.