The Social Enterprise Summer Fellowship Program at Columbia Business School provides support to students engaged in summer internships that create social and environmental value. Fellowships take place in the U.S. or abroad at nonprofit, government or nongovernmental organizations, for-profit and nonprofit social ventures, and social venture capital firms. MBA students seeking to transition between sectors, industries and functional areas use the summer to apply their business skills and explore social enterprise areas. These fellowships:

- Provide social enterprises that create social and environmental value with access to much-needed MBA talent that they could not otherwise afford to hire; and
- Provide students with experience and opportunities to apply their MBA skills to practical issues faced by these organizations.

MBA Summer Fellows Creating Value

The diversity of organizations and MBA students participating in the summer fellowship program reflects the breadth of the social enterprise field, which covers public and nonprofit management, sustainability, social ventures, international development, education, healthcare and microfinance amongst other areas. Past organizations that employed summer fellows include: Robin Hood Foundation, Education Pioneers, NY Department of Education, NYC Mayor’s Office for Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, Nonprofit Finance Fund, Harlem Children’s Zone, WNET.ORG / Thirteen.org, Freedom from Hunger, Endeavor, Enterprise Solutions to Poverty, Acumen Fund, Clinton Global Initiative, TechnoServe, Save the Children, Frogtek and ConnectUs.

Fellows help organizations across a range of projects and issues, including strategic planning, start-up business plan development, marketing and product strategies, financial analysis, operational improvements and performance evaluation.

Internship Guidelines

The Summer Fellowship Program contributes $200 to $600 per week for up to 10 weeks to selected summer fellows, depending on availability of funds. Summer fellowships must meet the following criteria:

- The internship description is well-scoped, has clearly-defined expectations and deliverables, and identifies the supervisor that the student will be reporting to;
- Activities and projects require the use of MBA skills and knowledge;
- Deliverables are challenging yet realistic and have a meaningful impact on the host organization;
- Students have mid- and end-of-summer reviews with the supervisor; and
- The employing organization provides a sufficient commitment by funding the internship to the maximum of its ability.

Employers are expected to contribute $600 to $1,000 per week to the intern’s salary. This amount may include in-kind support such as housing and transportation.

The Social Enterprise Summer Fellowship Program (formerly called CORPS Fellowship Program) was initiated in 1992 by MBA students. Funds are raised from students every year during fellowship fundraising week with support from staff and faculty members, alumni and supporters of the Program. This support reflects the conviction that Columbia MBA students can make a significant contribution to the field of social enterprise.
Nandeeta Seth ’10 interned with the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF), a national leader in financing nonprofits, strengthening their financial health and improving their capacity to serve their communities. NFF serves both nonprofits and their funders, offering an integrated package of financial and advisory services. Nandeeta reviewed financial statements and evaluated financial data to develop recommendations for a wide variety of nonprofit clients. She also worked to gather and analyze information from client organizations as part of the due diligence effort for loan requests. Read an excerpt from Nandeeta’s journal:

As we moved in for the diagnostic of the youth services organization, we discovered that their cash flow projections and budget were in shambles. I looked at this, however, as a chance to take initiative and use what we learned in the accounting core course! In several ways acting more like general managers with the client than a consultant, we helped the controller work on the cash flow, the budget and the projected financials for the next few years. The most interesting aspect of the internship, to me, was gaining the understanding that business principles can help nonprofits meet their mission more efficiently and effectively. No organization can meet its social goals if it is not financially viable—and this is where business comes in.

Caroline Lundberg ’10 worked with the TechnoServe Coffee Initiative in Kenya. TechnoServe helps entrepreneurs in poor areas of the developing world build businesses that create income, opportunity and economic growth. The Coffee Initiative supports farmers transitioning to more lucrative specialty coffee markets by providing access to a pulping machine that cleans their coffee beans to the standard required by the specialty market. Caroline worked to arrange financing between coffee farmer co-operatives and the pulping machine manufacturers. Specifically, she developed the financial structure, evaluated the creative collateralization methods, performed loan risk assessments, determined risk mitigation techniques and standardized contracts across Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania. Read an excerpt from Caroline’s journal:

TechnoServe partnered with 20 farmer co-operatives, or “clients,” to assist them with getting financing from a combination of supplier loans and local Ethiopian bank loans... We developed 20 different operating models, using key assumptions regarding coffee volume, coffee quality, coffee pricing and operating expenses. This helped us to predict how much cash flow the cooperatives will generate and, consequently, indicated their ability to repay the loans.

Anne Eidelman ‘10 spent her summer working with the KIPP Foundation, which is dedicated to creating a respected, influential, and national network of public schools that are successful in helping students from educationally underserved communities develop the knowledge, skills, character and habits needed to succeed in college and beyond. During the course of the summer, Anne, in conjunction with the Network Growth and Sustainability team, developed a framework to evaluate the sustainability of single site schools, including benchmarks of financials across the KIPP network. Read an excerpt from Anne’s journal about her internship experience:

Having written about the KIPP Foundation in my Columbia Business School application essay two years ago, the opportunity to learn how the organization works from an internal perspective has been a professional dream come true. I am grateful that I worked with smart and passionate team members who helped to create an environment where I felt valued. Now, I am looking forward to entering my second year at Columbia where I am excited to focus my energy on elective classes and extra-curricular activities that will help me to continue my own personal pursuits in the education reform movement.

Kesha Cash ’10 worked with the Majora Carter Group, a green economic consulting firm based in the South Bronx.