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 among other areas. Past organizations that employed summer fellows include: Robin Hood Foundation, AfricInvest, SolarKal, Education Pioneers, NY Department of Education, Praava Health, National Parks Service, Nonprofit Finance Fund, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Closed Loop Partners, Endeavor, New York Road Runners, Acumen Fund, De La Gente, Third Way Africa, and New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).

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.

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.
Thomas Frischknecht ’18 interned with eduK, an online educational platform that offers courses and other tools necessary for people to learn, grow, and invest in their areas of interest. The company’s ultimate goal is to empower low- and medium-income families to become entrepreneurs. EduK relies on free livestreaming as well as an exclusive catalog for subscribers, with over 1,700 courses in topics like gastronomy, crafts, photography, business, fashion, beauty, and more. His responsibilities included providing support to the firm’s board through preparing and analyzing financial statements, as well as sound financial projections used in the series C round of funding.

My internship allowed me to engage with two key actors in the space: the impact investors and the investees of social focus, who report to current investors and are always seeking further investments. This was complementary to my summer experience last year, where I had the chance to sit at the other side of the table: with the impact investor. Ideally, I am moving back to my home country to apply my new knowledge and skills to develop the place where I grew up. This summer served the purpose of learning and ensuring what I would like to do in the future.

Patience Olanitori ’18 interned at Praava Health, a Tamer Fund for Social Ventures portfolio member. Through medical centers, Praava provides quality health care for the middle class in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Patience worked with the medical services and innovations team on home-based medical services, as well as the experimentation and rollout process of the home care service. She also helped the communications team to evaluate and make recommendation to improve Praava’s feedback mechanisms.

My MBA improved my analytical skills to become more detailed in my research and decision-making. Core classes like corporate finance and business analytics helped me see how small details and quantifiable assumptions can have an impact in a final recommendation. Throughout my internship, I referred to my organizational change classes on how to work in an environment that is rapidly changing and in a different culture.

I came to the School to learn more about the health care industry and hone my analytical skills and expand my network. This fellowship let me combine and use my new tools to make an impact. Now, I am more certain that I can achieve my goal of starting a health care company in Nigeria.

Jose Clautier ’19 worked with solar broker SolarKal in New York City. Jose worked in business development, defining metrics and doing data analysis to provide management with tools to negotiate future rounds of funding. He also assisted the COO in evaluating SolarKal’s geographic expansion in the United States and supported the team in creating the overall strategy for the company. Lastly, he conducted research to identify trends and opportunities in cleantech for SolarKal.

I wanted to spend my summer at a fast-paced startup and that is definitely what I found in SolarKal. The impact you can have on a startup is potentially far more noticeable than the one you could have at a large firm. Seeing the impact of my work was very fulfilling. The work I did will help the company be better positioned for success in the future, and I’m looking forward to seeing them continue on a path of growth.