

TMC MOVES TO OFFER INTERNS MORE

Iowa State University Research Park

Surrounded by firms focused on pushing the bounds of the technology of tomorrow, TMC's satellite office in Ames may look a little out of place. The transportation company is focused on efficiently moving multi-ton flatbeds, packed with hard goods, across concrete and asphalt from sea-to-shining-sea. By contrast, many of its neighbors in the Iowa State University Research Park "push weight" by bouncing bits of data around the internet.

But upon closer examination, TMC is right at home in the ISU Research Park. While the company may employ a more traditional model of commerce, it is up-to-speed with the most technologically-advanced companies anywhere. Combining that commitment to technology with a clear vision of the talent needed to implement it pushed TMC to open an office in the ISU Research Park early in 2017.

Kenneth Kyle, who manages the office, says the company has always put an emphasis on identifying, nurturing and hiring talented students from Iowa State University. Making the investment in a physical location in the ISU Research Park was a logical next step.

"Our goal here is to establish a pipeline that will create internships for current students and jobs for recent graduates," says Kyle, who jumped at the opportunity to startup the Ames office. "We started with a small office in Ames in February and quickly outgrew our space. This has been an incredibly popular opportunity for interns because it offers them a chance to get

practical experience, literally minutes from campus."

Extending Its Reach
TMC has always recruited Iowa State students for internships, and has experienced great success in moving interns into full-time positions upon graduation. From those with experience in supply chain management, to IT graduates, there are several former Cyclones working at the TMC corporate office in Des Moines.

Much of the recruitment in the past was centered on the regular job fairs held on campus. Kyle says students often showed interest, but upon informing them that positions were only available in Des Moines, many turned down the opportunity.

"We have had an internship program for years," Kyle says. "But having a physical presence in Ames and making it convenient for students to work, even during the school year, takes it to another level. This has been a huge step up for us."

As the competition for talent has become more intense for companies like TMC, taking this step signaled a commitment to identifying the best and brightest and making an investment in their training ... long before an offer of full-time employment was a consideration.

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Gaining Practical Experience
Interns focused on transportation management at TMC benefit from hands-on experience in three distinct areas of the business. They perform rotations in logistics, customer service and operations. They work hand-in-hand with full-time staff to learn the ins and outs of each area, and then are given the responsibility of managing a portfolio of clients. Kyle says it gives them a realistic view of what it's like to work in the industry and for TMC.

"Our interns get a total transportation management experience," he says. "That is a lot different than what a lot of internships offer. We go the extra mile to expose them to the spectrum so they can find the area they are most comfortable in and the one they enjoy most."

The TMC office in Ames is staffed by a mix of full-time employees and interns, around 24 in total. Of those, seven are in IT and the rest are in transportation management.

Among those interns is Kelsey Peyton, a sophomore majoring in Supply Chain Management at Iowa State. Being

offered the responsibility of working directly with clients has helped her gain a better perspective on what a career in the field would look like.

"There is a lot more to it that I expected when I first started," Peyton says. "It has been valuable to have the opportunity to do so much. It's not just observation, we are working. That offers a sense of satisfaction at the end of each day."

Tom Berland, who is also majoring in Supply Chain Management and will graduate from Iowa State in Spring 2018, has been pleasantly surprised by the experience of interning at TMC.

"I thought that transportation might be something I would be interested in and I knew that TMC was a good company, so I pursued it," Berland says. "Having the chance to observe has been valuable, but nothing compares to the hands-on work. They have shown the trust in us to give us the reigns and allow us to do the job. This has allowed me to learn the job by doing."

The proximity to Iowa State is just a bonus.

"It's nice to be able to work right up to class time," Peyton adds. "The flexibility and ability to get here in a couple minutes makes it possible. I don't think I would be able to take advantage of an opportunity like this if it weren't so close."

All Part of the Plan

Giving interns an experience that extends beyond "watching and learning" is important to TMC.

"The goal of our internship program is to give them an experience that they enjoy, learn from and gain a full appreciation of all the job involves," Kyle says. "Our hope is that they will evaluate us while we evaluate them. If it is a win on both sides, we hope that we can move them into a full-time position as soon as they enter the job market."

"It's real-world here," says Carlos Velasquez-Romero, an MIS major who is finishing up an internship in IT as he prepares to graduate in December 2017. "We are provided the tools to enhance our capabilities. They encourage and support continuous education. I feel like I've learned more in this internship than I have anywhere else."

That offers Kyle a sense of satisfaction.

"We are intentional about building an experience our interns value," Kyle says. "We want to provide them the opportunity to feel they have accomplished something at the end of the day. We want them feeling that what they are doing is meaningful."

