Air Force Civilian Service
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UTSA Honors College

SUMMARY

Over the summer, I interned at Lackland Air Force Base for the Air Force Civilian Service. I worked on a project with a team of engineering interns supervised by a contractor who had been leading up the project when we arrived. Our goal was to take an experimental embedded system and successfully minimize it in order to save the Air Force a considerable amount of money. I was also yearning to develop my professional social skills as I had never before worked in a professional setting relating to my major. We were ultimately successful in our goals and not only minimized the technology but also improved it, tested it extensively, and documented it. During the experience, I was also able to learn how to communicate effectively in a professional setting.

SPICES

This experience embodied the professional development category of the SPICES. For the first time, I was able to work on a non-academic engineering project, participate equally in various staff meetings and voice my opinions in a professional setting.

HERBS

Honorable: Vetted for and trusted with security clearance
Resilience: Adapted to and overcame constant failures over a summer of working on cutting-edge technology

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Creative Courage: As a team, utilized available equipment and funds to design and produce a cost-effective solution for the Air Force
Agency through Accomplishment: Final product was praised by technical experts and sent off to multiple customers
Adaptability and Resilience: Project that we created had never before been done to our knowledge. As such, documentation was rare and failure was common. Overcoming frequent setbacks led to success.

IMPACT

The Air Force benefitted drastically as it was saved approximately $650,000 in development costs plus $13,000 per product produced. The product, once in action, will hopefully save American lives. I personally benefitted from this experience by learning how to interact professionally with both peers and superiors. I was also taught to be independent and to rely on my own ingenuity to solve problems as there was nearly no outside documentation on the problems we had to solve. Various technical areas of mine were also honed as I put my studies into practice.

ADVICE

I would greatly encourage engineering students to pursue an internship, whether with the Air Force or not. It will provide much hands-on experience, along with professional development that is needed before entering the workforce.