



NaJa Haynes-Williams

Since I was a small child, I knew I wanted to go into the field of computer science. Back then, I only had a vague idea of what that meant. When I brought my aspiration to the AnnieRuth Foundation, they arranged for me to complete my internship at the Jacksonville Transportation Authority. At first, I did not see the immediate connection between computer science and transportation. When I started the job however, I quickly came to understand the relevance as I was placed the cybersecurity team.

During my internship, I completed several projects that align with my aspirations. Researching current threats and studying relevant responses proved to be an integral part of job, and I know it will serve me down the line. While that sounds like independent work, I had a team to consult if I encountered any issues or just wanted to share what I learned. I also worked with vendors to make the best of their services for the better of the company. In cybersecurity, there are a lot of tools you need to work with to achieve the outcome you want. Using the resources at your disposal and communicating what you need to others is very important. It is a rigorous line of work, one that challenges you constantly—but it is extremely interesting and worth investing your time in. At JTA, I have gained hands-on experience with every element of cybersecurity, and it's an opportunity I will never forget.

Working at JTA was definitely instrumental to my success. Before working there, I only had the broad idea of computer science to go off of. Now, I know with certainty that I want to be a cybersecurity analyst. Having pinpointed my goal makes it a lot easier to pursue, and with the skills I have acquired during the internship, I feel well-equipped for the future.