

Introduction

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Kirsten Barber: You're listening to the NCDPS Safety Scoop, a podcast that dives into the stories of the people, programs and resources within the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Each episode, we'll give you the scoop from department personnel on how NCDPS enhances the safety of the people of North Carolina.

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Season 4 Episode 1

Kirsten: Happy 2025! A new year can sometimes bring new goals and aspirations, which can involve a new job. For our first episode of season four of the Safety Scoop, I sat down with the ringleader of the department's internship program, Tameka Judd, to discuss the evolution of the program, as well as upcoming internship opportunities within the Department of Public Safety. You'll also get to hear from a past NCDPS intern who was able to extend her original contract with the department after completing her ten-week assignment. If you're thinking about applying for an internship in state government or are considering a future career in the public sector, you definitely don't want to miss out on the information shared throughout this episode. With so much to unpack, let's get started with Tameka.

Tameka Judd: Hi, everyone! Again, my name is Tameka Judd, and I am the talent engagement internship program manager with, uh, NCDPS. I have been with the department for about four years. Wow, time has gone by fast. And I am enjoying creating experiential learning opportunities for students.

Kirsten: First and foremost, I would love for you to take us through the progression of the NCDPS internship program over the years since you've been with the department. So, you said you've been here for four years, so what has the last four years looked like?

Tameka: Wow, the last four years has truly been interesting. So, coming in May of 2021, we were on the cusp of COVID, and we were trying to navigate the space of "Are we working in person? Are we working remote?" So, literally during that process, we were trying to work on telework policies and trying to figure out how are we going to provide, uh, internship opportunities for students. We got through COVID, and now we're looking at more in-person. Um, we've realized that we can not only do remote, but we can do hybrid opportunities, and we are back introducing opportunities in person, which is amazing.

Some of the progression that we've gone through through the years is really tapping in and learning more about what our divisions do and their needs and understanding more about their employment, um, opportunities. One of the major things that we look at is we are all experiencing an aging workforce, right? So, we're looking at what does that workforce development plan look like for bringing in the next generation? So, we know that next generation are look—they're looking for a few components. Right? They're looking for flexibility, they're looking for pay and, most of all, they want to be career ready.

So, looking at those components and collaborating with both our hiring managers and our university partners, we're understanding that students, um, really need those eight, um, categories of career readiness, right? So, we're looking to create projects in which students are enhancing—they're enhancing their communication skills. Um, we're looking at projects that help increase their leadership skills. We're looking at projects that increase their professional development and teamwork. So, in collaboration with both of our hiring managers, our university partners, career services and, in addition, our, um, students, we are working on projects that will ensure their success when applying for a role.

Kirsten: You talk about these projects or these opportunities for, uh, interns or students, so the application period for the 2025 summer internships is now open. We're recording this on January 6th. That is a really exciting, uh, thing to look forward to, so what kind of projects are available for incoming summer interns?

Tameka: Oh, my goodness, we have some *amazing* projects and some amazing hiring managers that are giving us some great things to look forward to. So, we have our Purchasing and Logistics Department, um, that are going to give students a— a look into the business operation and supply chain management opportunities here at NCDPS. So, the successful student intern will be able to work on approving some small-dollar requisitions and studying market trends and assisting buyers in their day-to-day operations and activities. Also, our Controller's Office is— is offering a financial analyst and reporting internship project and financial accounting projects. I always describe, um, NCDPS as a city within a city, so we are, um, conducting business, and we need business majors.

If you're looking for opportunities in human resources, we're offering two, uh, projects in our National Guard division, um, in human resources. Also, let's not forget each agency, each division, each department, we have lawyers. And so, our ABC commission is offering, um, two projects, um, for students that are pursuing their law degree or are interested in being lawyers. Office of Violence Prevention is offering a project where students will be researching best practices in violence prevention and public health approaches. Just so many great opportunities for students, not only social work, not only psychology, but we're looking at students, um, that are majoring in supply chain management, business administration. We're looking for students that they're majoring in accounting and interested in finance. Um, also, we have internships in

construction engineering and working with GIS and doing mapping and so many interesting, exciting projects.

Kirsten: Those all sound like fantastic opportunities and, uh, so I hope any of, um, those interested in these opportunities, if you're listening, uh, make sure you hop on to the state government, uh, application system and get those applications in. We really look forward to meeting you and working with you.

Uh, you and I have definitely spoken about this before, but what a great way for someone who may be interested in pursuing either a career in state government or public safety for them to get their foot in the door and to learn a little bit more about the different types of opportunities, uh, available within state government and to make those connections.

Tameka: Absolutely. So, I always describe state government as a big house with many doors. And the wonderful thing about state government is that if you land an internship opportunity with NCD–DPS, you have now solidified that you understand how to apply, number one, by using your knowledge, skills and abilities. And that makes it that much easier to apply for another role at another state agency.

My personal example is that I spent at least six years at the North Carolina Department of Transportation doing this exact role: helping students find experimental learning opportunities. And from that I was promoted to come to NCDPS to do the same exact thing but on a higher level. And so, I've been able to create other opportunities, like we have our first high school internship program. We have, um, our neurodiverse internship program. We are working with the military to get them in. There are military folks that are transitioning that are interested in internship opportunities. We've created that. So, once you get into state government, the sky is the limit on what type of opportunities are open to you.

Kirsten: And since you spoke about, uh, applications and applying, what are your tips for those who are applying for upcoming internships, uh, with the Department of Public Safety?

Tameka: I would say, first and foremost, doing a little bit of research about the agency: what they do and if it aligns with your career goals. That's number one. Number two is reading the posting thoroughly. Right? So, if the posting is calling for an unofficial transcript, I advise for you to work on that now because once you submit that application, there's no way to go back in and upload that transcript outside of starting the process all over again. So, being prepared, having your unofficial transcript, having a reference letter already saved on your mobile device is the best way to finish the application and make sure that it is submitted successfully. Also, make sure that you are checking your emails, making sure that your voicemail, um, allows for us to leave messages. Sometimes students, they don't have their voicemail set up, and so we're unable to reach out to them and let them know that they've been extended an

offer. So, please make sure you're checking your email. Make sure that your voicemail is set up. So, yeah, those are some of the tips that I have for students landing a successful internship.

Kirsten: Those are all fantastic tips. So, we've walked through your top tips for those applying, but once a student is selected for an internship project, how can that student make the most of their time?

Tameka: Great question. So, last year, we created a bingo card that gives, um, instructions on how to be successful int—in your internship, and whoever—I love this part—whoever completes the bingo card, they get a prize. So, some of the areas on the bingo card is, like, learning more about NCDPS on the website or connecting with an NCDPS employee through LinkedIn. Going to a session; so, we have professional development sessions. Um, we offer at least three mandatory sessions, so making sure you're going to the professional development sessions. Also, we encourage you, take advantage of some of our LMS trainings. They have robust trainings that you can go in and get certifications that are nationwide recognized certifications, so take advantage of that because we're offering students a lot of opportunities to increase their resumé and their chances for landing a career with NCDPS.

Kirsten: We're going to shift now to hear from Parker, a past NCDPS intern, about her experience in the program. You'll get takeaways from her several-month-long experience interning with the Human Resources section.

Parker Jones: I am Parker Jones. I am a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and I am majoring in media journalism in the Hussman School with a concentration in public relations and advertising.

Kirsten: Parker, can you take us through how you learned about the NCDPS internship program and why you decided to apply?

Parker: I was very lucky one day just scrolling along job search websites, looking for a summer internship, at the end of my junior year, and I came across an HR communications intern position. And with public relations, it's a very broad major, so I didn't know exactly what I wanted to go into. I applied to the job after looking at the role responsibilities, thinking that it was things that my skills aligned with, and it looks like an enjoyable job where I could succeed in. So, I applied for the job and went through the interview process, and I really enjoyed the people that I spoke to. It was clear that they were very put-together and knew exactly what the intern's job was going to be. So then, I ultimately, after receiving the job offer, thought it would be a great opportunity to test my communication skills, and I liked the idea of an internship program where I could interact with other interns as well, even though they were doing completely different role responsibilities. And I was able to learn a lot about my state through the Department of Public Safety.

Kirsten: Awesome! Well, glad you just happened to come across that job posting and that you decided to apply. What did you know about working for the state before you applied?

Parker: Honestly, I didn't know entirely too much. I learned most of what I knew, obviously, through this internship and continuing to work. But I knew that state government had fantastic benefits. I didn't know specifically what they were at the time, so it was eye-opening to get to learn them by meeting all these different people and hear their perspectives of why they chose state government and continue to work for it in the long run.

Kirsten: So, initially you started out with just a ten-week assignment, so can you take us through those first ten weeks and kind of how things evolved after that?

Parker: At the beginning, I was very much just kind of getting my feet wet, and I had a very good mentor and supervisor who allowed me to introduce myself to everyone around the HR department and actually set me up with a few meetings with Recruiting and Benefits so that I could not only meet them but meet what the role of their teams were. So, my first ten weeks were very much understanding the professional setting and the HR department and how the Department of Public Safety ran as a whole while also having a specific project which in my case was event planning that I worked with my supervisor.

And another big project of mine was the Intern Chronicles which was a weekly newsletter that went out to all the interns in the internship program, and that taught me not only how to improve my writing skills that I've been working on in school, but also how to utilize new platforms, one being Constant Contact, or graphic design in Canva. So, it was very much coached by my supervisor, and then when it got to a certain point, she was very encouraging of me to go on my own and take over these tasks.

Kirsten: Awesome! So, correct me if I'm wrong, but you are on month eight of what was supposed to be a ten-week internship.

[Laughs]

Parker: I guess so!

[Laughs]

Kirsten: You obviously had your internship extended, which we are so grateful, um, that we can offer interns the ability to continue on, um, in building experience within the department. So, how has that been for you while also being a student and working part time for the Department of Public Safety?

Parker: I have been extremely lucky to have had this internship be extended because it worked perfectly where in the summer I was able to create those base relationships with the people I'd be working with and get in my groove of my

work environment and my work schedule, so that when I did go back to school, I was able to smoothly transition into working virtually, in my case, and have open communication with my supervisor with how many hours I could work and what times I would be available. And they have been super supportive of me continuing out my education while also supporting me in this internship extension and allowing me to still grow through this experience.

Kirsten: That's fantastic news. I want to talk to you a little bit about what—what's next. No pressure here...

[Laughs]

But with this experience, would you consider a potential career in state government after your experience within the Department of Public Safety?

Parker: Absolutely! Going through this experience has taught me the security in state government positions, and just the overall work environment is very positive, so it's definitely something that I believe would be a smart career choice for the long term.

Kirsten: And what advice would you give to college students that are a little bit earlier in their college career about internships and putting themselves out there? Any advice that you can share to them?

Parker: Do *not* be afraid to ask questions. That was something that I definitely struggled with in school is I was afraid that I was asking questions that would make people think that I was unqualified or unprepared, but those questions were ultimately what allowed me to learn the most, and that curiosity is what led me to growing in skills. The truth is that nobody really knows what they're doing...

[Laughs]

...in the beginning. Even if you think you know what you want to do, it might change, so when looking for internships and experiences, take the most out of your opportunities and learn the most that you possibly can from the individuals who have already been through it.

Kirsten: I think that's great advice even for people who are, uh, who are early in their careers or even switching careers. I think that's great advice that anyone can take. Um, well, anything else that you would like to share about your experience in the North Carolina Department of Public Safety internship program?

Parker: I really enjoyed making the most of the ten-week period that you are working with other interns. There are people that I met this summer who are very different from me, that have no interest in HR and were doing field work, yet they were so interesting to meet and create relationships with because they have completely different perspectives, yet they were so much fun to be

around. So, definitely making the most of that unique opportunity that is an internship program with everyone doing different things.

Kirsten: Now, back over to Tameka.

Now, I would love to hear some of the success stories, so we're going to look a little bit to the past and then we'll get a chance to look to the future. But what are some of the success stories—and I know you have so many to choose from—that you've heard over the years with past internships?

Tameka: I'd say the biggest success story is when an intern is, um, converted to permanent, so that's exciting all the time, but I think the most exciting is when I hear a student say, "I didn't know DPS offered all of these different amazing opportunities!" It makes us feel like we are educating next generation on the wonderful, uh, ways to become a part of state government. We've had students this past summer that continued past the summer internship. We had one student that worked with pro-protective services, and his role was to create their website. And so, the hiring manager increased his time with us to make sure that the project was fully completed and successful, and it went live with that new website. So, so many amazing success stories, with the most important being students landing a permanent position.

Kirsten: And you're spoken about this before. Not only are these projects building professional skills but also those soft skills: working as members of a team, communication. And in this time where someone can learn from current professionals, I think is such a valuable thing that our department can offer with these, uh, v-variety of projects, whether they're with our law enforcement or our unsworn divisions. So, looking to the future for what's happening this year, maybe in years to come, for the internship program, any developments that are going on that you can share with our listeners?

Tameka: Absolutely. So, with internships and work forever changing, we need to make sure that we are providing students with trainings and sessions that are helpful. One of the main focus for 2025 is creating a mentorship program. Uh, we know that mentorship is important because it helps interns further develop their skills. Um, it also encourages them to continue to reach for the stars. Um, having someone that supports your goals, your dreams, is always very important and gives them confidence. The mentor can help them kind of navigate their career development, also help them with other networking opportunities, um, within NCDPS. So, that's something that we are working on and hopefully will be established by, um, summer of 2025.

Kirsten: We have, uh, reached the end, but I do want to give you the chance if there's anything else you'd like to share, any closing thoughts.

Tameka: Absolutely. So, we are posting our opportunities, um, on our career page. We also post on Indeed, LinkedIn, and Handshake. So again, we're looking forward

to meeting all the students, um, and answering any questions you may have about internship opportunities.

Kirsten:

We are here to help you reach your career goals. As both Tameka and Parker said, NCDPS internships are dynamic with the flexibility for interns to make it their own while completing their projects. While this episode spoke about 2025 summer internships, NCDPS opens up internship applications throughout the year. Additionally, several NCDPS divisions have open opportunities all year long for college and high school students. Your best place to get started is by visiting ncdps.gov/internship. If you're interested in a future career in public service, you can also fill out the intern interest form on that page. This helps Tameka and her team learn what future public servants are interested in while building out NCDPS projects for upcoming cohorts.

[Pause]

Conclusion

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Kirsten:

This is the Safety Scoop, a podcast written, produced and edited by the NCDPS communications team. The mission of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety is to safeguard and preserve the lives and property of the people of North Carolina through preparation, prevention and protection with integrity and honor. Follow the department on social media for a closer look at ongoing initiatives and resources. We're on Facebook, X and Instagram at NC Public Safety. If you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to subscribe to the Safety Scoop on your favorite podcast app. I'm your host, Kirsten Barber. Thanks for listening.

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