

Alex Kautzman

Hometown: Bismarck, ND

School: University of Iowa

Internship: Bismarck Tribune



When I got back home after being kicked off of my campus in March, I found that I had too much time on my hands. So instead of being a bum and waiting for August to roll around again, I decided to apply for a summer internship on the odd chance that someone could afford to host one during the pandemic. I couldn't believe my luck when Amy Dalrymple at the Bismarck Tribune responded to my email, and I especially couldn't believe it when she offered me a position.

Although my time at the Tribune was short, the experiences and knowledge that I have gained in those eight weeks were invaluable to my development as a journalist. My internship not only taught me the basics of professional reporting and writing, it also introduced me to other opportunities that I otherwise would have never dreamed of doing.

I will admit that I was unbelievably nervous when I first walked into the newsroom. At the time, my only news writing experience came from working on my high school's newsmagazine. While I am studying journalism at the University of Iowa, I have not yet taken the fundamental reporting and writing classes that would have better prepared me for this internship. I initially felt that I was too inexperienced and underskilled to be successful in a professional setting.

Thankfully, the Tribune is staffed with amazing people who were patient with me and were always willing to lend a hand. They showed me the ropes and with their support, I was able to publish my first A1 story within the second week of my internship.

I also appreciate that my time as the summer intern was filled with reporting and writing and not the busy work and coffee-fetching that some other places offer. I got to hit the ground running by already having assignments on day one, experiencing a primary election on day two, and going to a press conference on day three.

More than anything, this internship has improved my writing capabilities. With every story I wrote, I got detailed feedback that allowed me to see and correct my mistakes. At first, I struggled with the basic story format and with writing proper ledes and nut graphs. It took me a while, but I now feel more adequately skilled to write a good news story. Thanks to the Tribune, my news writing classes this fall should be a cakewalk.

The variety of subject matter that I got to cover has also greatly impacted my reporting skills and gave me a chance to write a slew of stories that have granted me new experiences, knowledge, and a diverse portfolio. I can now say that I have written stories about the weather, community events, education, local government, sports, and crime.

I am so grateful for all of the outstanding people I got to meet and the opportunities that this internship brought me. Starting in September, I will be doing freelance work for the Tribune by writing the weekly MDU Teen of the Week stories. This opportunity will allow me to keep working on my writing and help me pay for my education.

My academic advisors told me that I should start looking at internships during my sophomore or junior year after I gained some experience and knowledge through coursework. While I still intend to learn and grow as a journalist, I am glad that my first exposure to professional writing came from being behind a desk in a newsroom instead of a classroom. My time at the Tribune has jump-started my writing career and serves as a strong starting point in my journalistic education.