

Delta Center for Culture and Learning Scholar Reviews (available in Robertson Connect)

Carsten Pran (Duke 2022)

I worked at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, creating promotional material (blog posts, videos, t-shirt designs and portfolios) for their "Most Southern Place on Earth" workshop. K-12 teachers from across the country apply to participate in this workshop which involves traveling around the Mississippi Delta, using 'place-based learning' to gain a better understanding of the history and culture of the region. During these week-long workshops, we captured photos and film and created daily blog posts and videos highlighting each day. By the end of both the June and July workshops, we created portfolios that encompassed the workshop in its entirety. These portfolios were the main deliverable media we created for the Delta Center to use in presenting the program's significance to its sponsors and to teachers interested in applying for the program.

This position taught me an extraordinary amount of skills from graphic design to interviewing. The position is difficult if you are not familiar with the Adobe software used to create the media (as I was), but there are free online tutorials that help immensely. I recommend watching these and potentially practicing on mock projects before arriving in Cleveland. Be prepared for long days and longer nights during workshop weeks, as they are jam-packed with activities and editing. This position is also an amazing opportunity to express creativity and hone your visual arts skills whether in the form of photography, videography or even illustration.

Kamryn Washington (Duke 2022)

No comments provided.

Lawton Ives (UNC 2021)

During my community summer, I worked as a documentarian at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. Along with Jake Sheridan, my primary job was to capture and produce video and photo content for their NEH-funded "Most Southern Place on Earth" Institute for school teachers. Each Institute lasted a week and brought 36 K-12 Teachers from around the country to the Mississippi Delta. Before arriving in the Delta, I took a three-week road trip to Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico (among 11 other states). Since community summer starts almost a month after exams end, I would definitely encourage people to spend some time exploring!

Without a doubt, the Delta Center is the best place to be in the Delta! Do all that you can to soak up the people and the culture. However, it is not all fun and games. Anyone going to the Delta for the summer should realize that life just moves a little more slowly there. Much of the work is self-directed, so it would be wise to make a plan at the beginning of the summer that you can hold yourself accountable to. You should also do what you can to get a handle on the adobe products before starting. Lynda.com is a great training resource that is available online through Duke. If you have the time, it would be useful to complete the basic courses for Lightroom, Premiere, and InDesign.

Jake Sheridan (Duke 2021)

I worked for the Delta Center for Culture and Learning as an intern during the Delta Center's 'Most Southern Place on Earth' NEH Workshop. My job, aside from normal intern stuff (set up, coffee, etc), was to document the conference and to create deliverables that could be used by teachers and to present to the NEH. I took and edited photos and videos and used Adobe software to make blog posts, edit websites, and create videos. I also helped operate the Delta Center's social media.

Talk to me and Lawton (and the older scholars who have had this job) before you go. There is a lot of nuance to work around and you can get a better head start than we did, but it's a lot to fit in here. Make sure your content is well organized, create a vision for what you want to produce everyday early in the summer, spend some time honing skills

before you get here / early into your time here (use online classes to learn inDesign, PremierePro, and LightRoom!! - Lynda is a great tool provided by Duke to do this that we discovered much too late), and try to create a reasonable plan for distributing work. The distribution bit is especially tricky, considering most people (well, at least us) are inclined to want to do the fun stuff (video) and have no conception of how long it takes to do most of these tasks. Really though, get lunch with me and Lawton and we'll talk about all of this.

Care more about the people than the work. I learned more from Lee than I did from video-editing. I learned more listening to the speakers at the conference than I did photographing them. The content you'll be exposed to at the workshop is amazing. It makes the Delta Center unique among community shops because it provides by far the most knowledge and understanding about any of the locations. I very much know the Delta because of my job. Also, I am biased, but working in the office is eye-opening and important too. Lee is an absolute character, the queen of the Delta, and I have been so fortunate to spend time with her. The same goes for Dr. Herts, who's a great guy. The rest of the office is fun and interesting, and I learned a lot about myself from the way I interacted with everyone and my work. Look for learning outside of the skills you'll pick up at the Delta Center. You basically have two weeks of intense work and a month and a half of looking for something to do, so grow in that extra time by spending it being present in this really unique place.

Peter Andringa (UNC 2020)

Lived in Cleveland, MS and worked with the Delta Center for Culture and Learning doing primarily video production, photojournalism, and print design.

If you're in Cleveland, use every free weekend possible to travel around and see the area. The Delta is an incredibly unique and fascinating region, so take this opportunity to explore as much of it (and the surrounding regions) as possible. We went to cities like Memphis, Birmingham, Oxford, and New Orleans, and we felt like we didn't even do half of the interesting trips that were possible.

Also take time to get to know the Cleveland community – go to Trivia Night at Hey Joe's, become friends with Will Jacks, and try to meet some TFA or Delta State students. It's a truly unique town unlike most you'll live in, so you should really take advantage of it.

Cara Price (UNC 2020)

I worked at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. Our primary responsibilities involved documenting the two weeklong workshops the center holds, which immerse educators from across the country in the history and culture of the region. During the workshops, we interviewed participants, photographed their experiences, and produced daily videos and reports. (For an idea of what these looked like, check out the Most Southern Place on Earth section of the Delta Center website.) The hours were long during these two weeks, and balancing multimedia with small errands (coffee!) was sometimes tough, but I also consider the workshops the best part of the internship; we got to learn alongside the teachers, hear from scholars, travel around the Delta, etc. It was also really rewarding to interview them, as it gave us direct insight into what they were feeling and how the workshops will actually affect their classrooms. After the workshops, we were busy uploading all of the media to the website and putting together the portfolios. These ~80 page documents summarize the workshops through text and photos. This year, Will encouraged us to draw heavily from previous years' portfolios, especially for text and layouts. Although we made them our own, the content itself didn't change significantly. Our responsibilities were less clearly defined in the weeks leading up to the workshop. Although we ran errands and helped prepare, there was a lot of downtime. We used some of it to teach ourselves Adobe programs, but we also spent our Fridays off exploring the Delta with Will -- one of the best parts of the summer by far!

Get to know your coworkers! At the Center, Lee, Dr. Herts, and Pat are all super friendly and full of interesting stories. Outside of work, we spent hours driving around the Delta with Will, who's always willing to answer our questions about the region. Some of my favorite memories from this summer involve just sitting in the car, watching the scenery and listening to him talk about local politics, history, etc. During the workshops, take time to chat with the teachers,

who have incredibly diverse experiences in both their personal lives and their classrooms (awesome if you're interested in education).

On another note, don't get discouraged if you don't have much to do in the first few weeks. Take the time to educate yourself -- both on the technical skills that'll be critical during the workshop and on the history of the Delta. Read! And don't feel guilty if you aren't constantly "on" at work. Workplace culture and pace of life might be different than what you're used to; there isn't such a cult of productivity. It'll pick up once the workshops start, and then you'll be missing those days you had time to relax!

Kyra Exterovich-Rubin (UNC '19)

I lived in Cleveland, Mississippi, and worked at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. At the Delta Center, I documented two teacher workshops hosted by the Center by building a comprehensive portfolio of the workshops' programming and the teachers' experiences in the Delta.

Besides the technical skills of learning how to use Adobe InDesign and Adobe Lightroom, the best skill I took away from working at the Delta Center was how to effectively work alongside peers who may have different work styles than me. My appreciation for the work that I did over the summer grew drastically as I delved into the history and importance of the Delta through the teacher workshops. I was initially worried about working at the Delta Center because I entered the summer wishing I was working hands on with kids of the area. I assumed that only "hands on" work would be meaningful, but the Delta Center gave me the time and space to immerse myself in the stories of the Delta that are often left to the wayside. No matter your professional aspirations or experiences -- whether you've worked in offices before or (like me) are a previous camp counselor who has never spent a summer inside, I think every scholar can derive immense meaning from working at the Delta Center. I also loved living in Mississippi, even though it was the first time in my life that I've spent an extended amount of time in the south. Cleveland will break your expectations in the best way, and I can't stress how much I loved traveling around the Delta. In whatever way you can, absorb the culture of the Delta as much as possible. It's a special place.

Trey Walk (Duke '19)

I worked with the Delta Center for Culture and Learning to help facilitate and document the National Endowment for the Humanities, "Most Southern Place on Earth" workshops. Teachers from around the country come to the Delta to learn about civil rights and blues history that happened in the Delta. Our job specifically was to photograph and document the workshops to create a portfolio of the week. We did this using Adobe InDesign which we learned once we arrived. We also worked with a local photographer named Will Jacks to produce daily update videos of the workshop which allowed us to learn a lot about videography and Adobe Creative Suite.

The Delta Center is the management entity for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, a project of the National Parks Service to promote certain regions of the country and their cultural importance to America. We worked with Will Jacks on producing videos for the MDNHA. We got to travel the Delta and interview locals about their experiences in the region. We also got lots of footage of the geographical region. It was a really formative experience and gave us a really deep sense of place.

Overall: we walked away from the experience with a ton of knowledge of the Delta reading (from lots of reading, the Delta Center, the NEH workshops, and speaking to locals during the MDNHA project) and a lot of technical knowledge of how to storytell using photography, videography, and design.

The Delta was such a formative experience for me. If you are at all interested in civil rights, American history, public policy, healthcare, economic inequality, economic development, race relations, or anything similar- there is something for you to do in the Delta. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about the experience because I have tons of stories I am dying to share about it.

This experience will really open your eyes to a lot and I also think the pace of life (moderate) is perfect for building the Robertson community. We had lots of night time and weekend time together which was great. I also think that this

location in particular is really great about integrating the Robertson's into the community. We met tons of locals through our work with the Delta Center and I really felt that I got a feel for the place and the people.

Anna Mukamal (Duke '16)

I worked with Andy Tan-Delli Cicchi at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, a branch of Delta State University. We were the official photographers and documentarians of a workshop called "The Most Southern Place on Earth" run through the Delta Center and led by Luther Brown and Lee Aylward. Offering continuing education credits to educators, the workshop attracts primary and secondary teachers from all over the United States. Andy and I created two portfolios documenting all the workshop activities; these were submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities. I did the writing for the portfolio and took some pictures, while Andy took most of the pictures and did the design work. Also, just in terms of logistics, Andy was in MS for the entire summer while I was there for 2 weeks because of a health problem I was dealing with throughout the summer.

I learned that the more open and vulnerable you are willing to be towards your fellow Scholars, the closer and stronger relationships you are going to cultivate. I think that the Delta Center is going through a period of transition because Luther Brown (the former director) just retired, so I really can't predict the direction that the Center is going to take. I would recommend my internship organization to someone who is really, really interested in American history and cultural preservation. I would also note that for anyone with special dietary preferences, the only place to buy groceries is WalMart, which is something good to know before getting there.

Minhaz Islam (Duke '15)

I worked at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at the Delta State University. My prime role was to attend 2 workshops and create 2 portfolios describing why these workshops are worthwhile in preserving the great culture, history, heritage and music of the Mississippi Delta, the birthplace of American culture. In the process of doing it, I had the opportunity to immerse in depth with the beauty, pain, pride and lessons of the MS Delta and to interact and learn with great faculties from all over the nation who participated in the workshops. Here is one of the portfolios that I made and was submitted to NEH, the sponsoring body, as part of the proposal of why such workshops should be continued and promoted. The best part is that the application was successful and the center received the funds for the subsequent year. <https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B1PSpynN8ps8NTc4LTZMNC1ZblU>

Tori Wilmarth (Duke '13)

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning (<http://www.blueshighway.org/>) is an organization that works to preserve and promote the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta. The Delta Center runs workshops for teachers from across the country, offers heritage tours of the Delta, has helped create and expand the Mississippi Blues Trail (<http://msbluestrail.org/>), and much more. You don't need any previous knowledge of the Delta, but you will learn a lot about it working here. Key Projects:-WORKSHOP PORTFOLIOS: Jessica Broadus (UNC '13) and I participated in and documented the NEH Most Southern Place On Earth Workshops. We created portfolios of the workshops, which can be found here <http://www.blueshighway.org/mostsouthernplace.htm> -2013 SERVICE PROJECT: We partnered with the Harry Potter Alliance (<http://www.thehpalliance.org/>) to distribute books throughout the Delta as a part of their literacy campaign. As a part of this work, we organized the 2013 service project for the Josie Robertson Day of Service, where we unpacked, sorted, and repacked a warehouse full of books to be distributed throughout the Delta, including at all of the organizations Delta Robertson Scholars worked with this summer.

The Delta Center is a fantastic organization doing some very important work to promote and preserve the history and culture of the Delta. A big part of your work at this placement is learning a lot about the Delta (although no previous knowledge is necessary), so if you are considering this placement, you need to be open to learning a lot about this fascinating part of the country. Be aware that this placement and the Bolivar County Community Action Shelter are the only placements in the Delta (at least during the summer of 2010) that are not teaching placements, which makes for a different type of experience. Hilary Henry (Duke '12), who worked at the Delta Center during the summer of 2009, put it well when she said that the teaching placements learn about the Delta through their students, while at the Delta Center you learn about the Delta through the history and culture (workshops, visiting powerful and important historical places, etc). While working at the Delta Center, I collaborated constantly with Jessica Broadus (UNC '13), the other scholar placed at the Delta Center. Working with Jessica was not only enjoyable, but it was valuable to be

able to process and discuss our experiences together, particularly around the rich civil rights and racial heritage of the Delta.

I absolutely love the Delta and would be happy to talk to anyone considering spending the summer in Mississippi. I also have lots of photos, music, video footage, and other resources to share if you want to get a taste for the Delta.

Jessica Broadus (UNC '13)

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning is an organization that helps preserve and promote the heritage of the Mississippi Delta. By hosting both national and regional workshops for teachers, leading heritage tours, and facilitating the creation of The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and The Mississippi Blues Trail, the Delta Center works to honor Mississippi culture. KEY PROJECTS:-WORKSHOP PORTFOLIOS: I worked with Tori Wilmarth (Duke '13) to document as well as participate in the teacher workshops hosted by the Delta Center. We created summary documents of the NEH Most Southern Place on Earth and Yazoo Mississippi Levee Board workshops. These documents included summaries of activities, pictures, and contact information. (Documents can be found at <http://www.blueshighway.org/>)-2013 SERVICE WEEKEND: As on-site facilitators for the Class of 2013 Service Weekend, we helped plan and coordinate the weekend's events. We worked with the Robertson Staff to accommodate scholars from all four locations gathering for a weekend of service in the Delta.

The Delta Center is such a unique and essential place. Dr. Brown and his staff work tirelessly to celebrate and preserve the history and culture of the area-- protecting it, sometimes single-handedly, from being forgotten. By working at the Delta Center, you will learn so much about the heritage of the land and gain a deep appreciation and connection to the Delta as a place. The Delta has so much to teach us--you just have to come with an open mind and allow yourself to be engulfed in your surroundings.