

## Writing Her Own Ticket: Shell Revenue Accountant Intern Linda Wiström

By Aaron Ragan-Fore

Senior accounting major Linda Wiström interned this summer in New Orleans with the Shell Exploration & Production Company, and her assignment may seem too good to be true. A 40-hour per week, paid internship as a revenue accountant for a prestigious company, complete with a relocation budget and all for course credit? It's a dream internship for a business school undergraduate, and it would be easy to assume that Wiström must have an oil magnate uncle in her pocket to put in a good word for her. Real life, of course, is rarely that easy. Linda has another ace up her sleeve: hard work.

Though enrolled in the accounting department's Internship Program, Wiström pursued this opportunity without assistance. She applied online with Shell, marketed herself effectively, and was even proactive in arranging for her housing. "This is really like me going out and getting it on my own," says Wiström, "I received an interview because University of Washington students are very well-qualified. Shell does recruit, but it's mostly in the South and Southeast."

It's easy to see why Wiström was attracted to Shell. "It's big money, it's real global," she notes. "There are certain aspects, like finance and accounting aspects, that are different from what I learned in school. It's not only applying what I learned in school; I'm learning something completely new." And has her Business School education prepared her for the challenges of corporate America? "Absolutely," she asserts. "It's not just my accounting and finance backgrounds at all. What has been most helpful for me is overall business education, the whole environment, [learning] how to be a businessperson in general." She specifically credits the writing skills, communication skills, and networking skills she has acquired as an undergraduate, as well as her membership in the UW chapter of the accounting fraternity Beta Alpha Psi.

Pete Dukes, associate dean for undergraduate programs, sees no substitute for Wiström's brand of hustle. "I wish I had more Linda's," he remarks, "[students] who are willing to take responsibility for furthering their education beyond the classroom."

The Business School is renewing its focus on internships as a central element of the undergraduate experience, and Dukes is at the center of that push. "We're trying to drive the notion of internships even further into our program," Dukes explains. "We have bright kids, and I know that they're going to do fine in the classroom. The thing that will set them aside or make them special is this second piece: learning about the industry, learning about career opportunities, getting closer to the business world." Dukes sees Wiström as a model of this plan, and comments, "She gets to write her own ticket, in some ways."

Meanwhile, Wiström finds that after high school in Federal Way and college in Seattle, New Orleans is an exciting but unorthodox city. "This place is more foreign to me than some European countries I've been to," she says. Southern hospitality is the norm in her workplace, however, and Wiström calls Shell very cross-functional. "You can talk to anyone. There's no boss that's too good to talk to you or help you."

Like Linda Wiström herself, her advice to intern hopefuls is both direct and practical: "Create your own opportunities. Test yourself. It's the kind of thing that makes you even stronger. It's not just the internship opportunity; it's the life skills you learn from it." Associate Dean Dukes couldn't agree more. "Take responsibility right now for planning your educational experience here, and your career," he urges undergraduates. "Internship is a piece of that whole."



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