

## Venturing into Uncharted Waters

# Summer Minority Undergraduate Intern Program in Transportation at TRB

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During the summer of 1983 the Transportation Research Board, in cooperation with the Office of Civil Rights, Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), conducted an internship program for minority undergraduate students. This program, a first for TRB, now will be evaluated and, if given a "good report card," UMTA is committed to making it a continuing effort.

Summer internships have long been a part of the educational experience in the United States and have usually provided students with opportunities for continued education while obtaining practical work experience in a sponsoring company or institution. Such internships usually last through

amount of funding for the project. It was agreed that the program would run for a period of 10 weeks; there would be a national competition; a panel of judges would be established to recommend participants for the program, but final selection would be the responsibility of TRB; the interns would receive a stipend of \$3500 for the 10-week period; and TRB would develop an evaluation mechanism for the program.

A brochure and application form were then developed. The brochure included a brief history of the project, eligibility requirements, location of the program, information on stipends, evaluation and selection criteria, conditions of appointment, administration of awards, and application materials. It was originally intended to mail the brochures to minority institutions in December 1982, but due to staff changes at UMTA the actual mailing of the brochures and application forms did not take place until May 1983. This had a significant effect on the number of applications received and the ability to ensure that students selected for the program would be available to participate.

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## Feature

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the summer and provide an opportunity for undergraduate students to become involved in activities that will transfer to their chosen careers. The TRB program was designed to accomplish these universal goals while, at the same time, provide the interns with an opportunity to view the transportation industry from a researcher's point of view.

### BACKGROUND

For many years the Transportation Research Board has conducted a field visit program that, as one of its goals, requires TRB staff to visit a number of universities. One of the objectives of this program is collecting information about students enrolled in transportation majors. As TRB broadened its interests over the years and universities with minority enrollments developed substantial expertise in the field of transportation, various institutions began to express concerns regarding the difficulty of placing good students, particularly minority students, without experience, into transportation agencies. This interest in the future of minority students and the current dearth of minorities in the field of transportation generated the idea of conducting a summer intern program for minority students in transportation.

The overall purpose of the program was to expose minority students to the field of transportation so that they would continue to pursue transportation as a profession. Thus, the pool of minority professionals making decisions on transportation-related issues would eventually increase.

UMTA's Office of Civil Rights expressed interest in funding such a program. Over a 10-month period (May 1982-March 1983) it agreed to the tasks to be performed and the

### SELECTION

The selection panel for the project was appointed in May, reviewed the applications received, and recommended the individuals to be considered for the program. This panel consisted of Joyce Johnson, North Carolina A&T State University; Moges Ayele, Morgan State University; Sid Davis, Davis Associates; Frank Enty, UMTA liaison; and TRB staff member Stephen E. Blake.

The panel met on June 6. After establishing criteria and procedures, the panel reviewed 14 applications and recommended six individuals to staff from which three would be chosen for the program.

TRB staff reviewed the six applications, selected the final three, and contacted the individuals. The three interns selected for the first year of the program were Mary Ann Satterthwaite of Howard University, Reuben Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University, and Charles Conrad of North Carolina A&T State University. Even though the applications covered a wide range of transportation disciplines, two of the three interns selected were enrolled in traditional transportation majors.

Satterthwaite is a civil engineering major and intends to pursue a career as a transportation engineer. Her summer

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Blake is an Environmental Specialist on the TRB Technical Activities Staff and directed the intern program.



At work session during summer intern program are (L-R) TRB Executive Director Thomas B. Deen, Charles Conrad, Mary Ann Satterthwaite, TRB Intern Program Coordinator Stephen E. Blake, Reuben Jenkins, and Michael Virts of UMTA's Office of Civil Rights.



At "graduation" are (L-R) TRB Executive Director Thomas B. Deen, Charles Conrad, Mary Ann Satterthwaite, Reuben Jenkins, and TRB Intern Program Coordinator Stephen E. Blake.

research project focused on an analysis of current and experimental deicing techniques and their cost effectiveness for snow and ice removal in the District of Columbia.

Jenkins, also a civil engineering major with an emphasis on transportation, plans to pursue a master's degree and subsequently a career in transportation. Jenkins' research project was a study of the feasibility of installing an automated fare collection system on a transit system that is now using manual fare collection.

Conrad is a business major who is interested in the marketing aspects of transportation. He plans to pursue graduate work in business administration and enter the field of transportation in a managerial capacity. His research project examined seat belt use among minority populations and the factors that influence this behavior.

### ACTIVITIES

In addition to their research projects the interns worked at two local transportation agencies performing tasks that related to their interest in transportation. These agencies were the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Office of Mass Transportation, District of Columbia

Department of Transportation. This work experience was one of the most beneficial aspects of the program. It provided the interns with an opportunity to have first-hand experience in the day-to-day operations of transportation agencies. It also gave them access to experienced individuals who could assist them in researching their proposed topics and in developing their career plans in transportation.

The interns also participated in seminars at UMTA and Howard University, attended several TRB functions, and visited the American Public Transportation Association as well as other area agencies.

### CONCLUSION

Since this was the first year of the program, there were some adjustments required as the internship period progressed. Congressional briefings were dropped and work on funded TRB projects was not pursued. But these were minor changes, given the benefits the interns received from other aspects of the program. The major objective, that of exposing the interns to the transportation community and reinforcing their desire to pursue transportation careers, was achieved. Not bad for a first course!

Plan to Attend . . .

63rd TRB Annual Meeting  
January 16-20, 1984  
Washington, D.C.

(see stories on pages 29-30)