Job Summary

This summer, I spent twelve weeks working on the dose reduction team, part of the CT Systems division of GE Healthcare. As the name suggests, the team’s function is to reduce the amount of radiation to which the patient is exposed during a CT scan. The difficulty in this regard is in maintaining the same image quality at lower doses. One of the members of the team was assigned as my mentor and project leader for the summer, and it was to him that I reported. He assigned me three main projects to complete during my time here, all with obvious benefits to the dose team. Without going into detail about the projects, each required a balance of hands-on work, using the CT scanners, and data analysis in Matlab and Microsoft Excel. A single day of orientation (to GE Healthcare, not my specific job) was provided at the beginning of the summer. My mentor provided readings to bring me up to speed on the work I would do, but most training took place in the CT scanning bays.

As an Applied and Engineering Physics major, with a minor in Biomedical Engineering, my work this summer was quite relevant to my studies and career interests. The theory of CT scanners is based on x-ray physics, and their application to biomedicine is obvious. While I found the work to be quite interesting, I was also struck by the realization that I don’t want to spend my life sitting at a desk, making me decide to go to medical school, which I had been considering anyway. I believe this is part of the importance of internships—it’s not just about getting experience, it’s about figuring out how that experience will fit into your career. Last fall I had a bad experience with GE Aviation—I didn’t consider this a failure, but rather a lesson: clearly a career with aircraft engines was not in my future. Personally, this internship helped me learn about taking initiative and responsibility. I’ve always wondered how a job like this works—who tells you what to do on a daily basis? Working at GE Healthcare made me realize there isn’t someone to do that—you determine what your overall goals are, then work towards them every day, with guidance, perhaps, but not instruction. This job also made me more comfortable working with other people—particularly my superiors.

Students on their first rotation with GE Healthcare will almost certainly be required to work in the Milwaukee area. There are four sites in the area—two in Milwaukee, one in the suburb of Wauwatosa, and the headquarters in Waukesha. All four sites are within about a forty minute drive of each other. A few months before my start date, the co-op coordinator at GE Healthcare sent out an
email to all prospective interns detailing housing opportunities in the area. Most of these are some form of summer housing on the university campuses in Milwaukee. While expensive, these are ideal in terms of ease, as they are located in the city and will be where most of the interns choose to live. Personally, I wanted something cheaper, and did my own search for housing. Using Craigslist, I found many other opportunities, both within Milwaukee and in the suburbs—prices in the suburbs are about $200/month cheaper on average, but with the disadvantage that few other interns will choose to live outside of the city. Careful planning will allow a student to live in the city and walk or bike to work if placed at one of the Milwaukee sites; otherwise, a car is a must for transportation.

GE Healthcare hires approximately 200 summer interns to the Milwaukee area, providing plenty of people to partake in social activities. It was not uncommon for weekly activities to be planned through the company’s Outlook email client, including picnics, beach days, and even bar crawls for over-21 interns. The company also encourages community service, offering interns the chance to join a community service group when they start working. This group provided multiple volunteerism opportunities, including at local charity walks and blood drives. Working at GE Healthcare includes the benefit of free gym access. Pickup soccer and soft ball games were available a few times a week after work, and were also scheduled through Outlook. Additionally, during the Olympics, GE Healthcare hosted a ping pong competition that all were welcome to participate in.

Overall, working at GE Healthcare has been an excellent experience. The best part of the job was coming to work every day knowing that my projects were making an impact on the company as a whole, and were not just busy work. The worst part was the location—I was raised in Massachusetts, so working out in Wisconsin meant being separated from all of my friends and family. Additionally, as a native Bostonian it was hard to get excited about the city of Milwaukee (though a weekend trip down to Chicago was certainly exciting), and I made the bad choice of living outside of the city, making for an even less interesting life outside of work. Still, this just meant I had to make new friends and find new ways to occupy my time, neither of which is ever a bad thing, and the experience as a whole only lasted 12 weeks. Besides, having a company like GE Healthcare on your resume before you even graduate is a major plus, whether your plans involve grad school or going right to work.