The School of Biological Sciences is home to one of our campuses most extensive tropical botanical collections which is located within Abelson Hall. This greenhouse showcases a plethora of unique specimens for educational purposes and public outreach. The greenhouse also accommodates graduate research work as well. Beyond the greenhouses the internship encompassed caring for plants throughout the education buildings at WSU. This included plants from Cleveland, Eastlick, and Heald hall. These plants became the focal point of my internship. Caring for these plants helped me reach my career goals by putting my skills as a botanist and horticulturist to the test.

The main responsibilities of the internship pertained to caring for all the plants within the botanical collection, but specifically the 100 plants scattered throughout Cleveland, Eastlick, and Heald hall. Some of the responsibilities outlined in my internship included,

- Maintaining the outdoor plant collection
- Monitoring weather patterns
- Transporting specimens inside during the cold season
- Pruning and cleaning plant debris
- Watering all plants
- Fertilizing and supplementing nutrients to specimens
- Adjusting care plans as seasonal changes occurred
- Informing my mentor of any pests or pathogenic problems
- Care for the iconic WSU Ficus
- Grow as a lifelong learner
- Improve my communication skills

The Hibiscus served as our indicator plant that would help us estimate when the next watering was necessary. Learning how to effectively read plants is an essential skill that every horticulturist should be trained to do. You must know what your plants need for them to thrive. The picture above is me and my fellow botanists moving the outdoor collection inside for the late fall/winter season. Just one of the many ways this internship helped my communication and teamworking skills.

This experience has fostered my professional growth in many ways. This internship has allowed me to curate my career goals of improving my communication skills and continuing my endeavor of lifelong learning. I improved my communication by,

- Gaining more confidence when talking to others
- Learning to work cohesively in a team and delegate tasks
- Giving public tours
- Sharing information about the specimens as necessary with my mentor and peers

My journey of lifelong learning also continued as I gained more knowledge working in the greenhouse. This included,

- Learning to be okay with making mistakes during the learning process
- Taking knew knowledge and applying it to my care regime
- Performing my duties without questioning my abilities
- Obtaining Greenhouse experience with hands on work
- Reading plants and understanding their finnicky nature
- Effectively monitoring and observing plants and their environment

All these tasks have helped to improve my confidence in communicating with others in the work force and has fulfilled my passion for continued learning. These skills are transferable and essential to any career I decide to pursue. Extremely grateful for the opportunity to work under Charles Cody. Being able to work under a professional master greenhouse keeper has provided me with so much insight and has inspired me to explore the horticultural field with more confidence. Definitely an experience of a lifetime.

This is a photo of my mother and me in front of the iconic Ficus in Cleveland hall during Mom’s Weekend. Although the greenhouses are famous for hosting Mom’s weekend tours, WSU is also notoriously known for its giant Ficus elastica. The education buildings are filled with extensive botanical life, and it was an honor to be able to care for them. This ficus was just one of the many plants I had the chance to grow with.

Potted plants outside of Heald Hall that I watered and transported inside for the season.