Charles Brickley (Mechanical Engineering, 2016)
Student Trainee (Mechanical Engineer)
Full-time, 40 hours per week
Paid

What do you do as an intern at this organization?
I assist on many of the research projects that aim to improve railroad crossing safety and to prevent railroad trespassing. The project I spent the most time on was setting up and testing a solar/wind powered wireless camera system which could monitor activity from a remote location to collect data for research projects.

How did you find your internship?
I heard about the Volpe Center from a professor, and found the internship on Jumbo Jobs.

What do you enjoy most about your internship?
I am considered a federal employee, so I get all the benefits of being a federal employee, including paid holidays and paid time off. This internship is part of the Pathways program, which means that I can continue to work at the Volpe Center over breaks from school, and after graduation there is potential for conversion to a full time position. Also, I can go in to work anytime between 6:30am and 10am, so I have a lot of flexibility in my hours.

What do you find challenging?
Getting hired by the federal government is a long, involved process with lots of paperwork, a background investigation, and even an interview with a federal investigator. Once I was finally hired, I went to new employee orientation for my first four days and did lots of required online training. When I finally settled in to start working, there wasn’t always a lot of work for me to do, so I was bored at times.

What advice would you offer to someone who wants to make the most of an internship like yours?
You have to apply through usajobs.gov for any Pathways position. If working at the Volpe Center, seek out people who are motivated and really care about their projects, and ask them if you can help them with anything. Try to get involved as much as possible so you always have projects to work on.

About the Organization
Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Cambridge, MA

For over 40 years, Volpe has helped the transportation community navigate its most challenging problems. As the National Transportation Systems Center, our mission is to improve transportation by anticipating and addressing emerging issues and advancing technical, operational, and institutional innovations across all modes.