

How the Summer Gave Me Hope for the Future

Several months ago, I pulled back the curtain and let my readers know what life as the [only female employee](#) at Intellectual Takeout is really like. It was revealing – and [even startling](#) to some individuals.

But I've had a unique experience this summer. No longer am I the only female staff member of this institution. That changed with the start of our Alcuin Internship program which brought three lovely young ladies and three delightful young men into my circle of co-workers.

Let's face it. Having young, unknown college students come and join a close-knit team for ten weeks can be a bit daunting. After all, one never knows if the actual talent will be as strong as the resume, or if work ethic will be lacking, or if one mistake will knock the whole website out of service. Perhaps that's why most internships simply have students make coffee or file business cards. Better to have them in a non-influential position than give them a chance to express the easily-offended, instant-gratification attitudes many young people are said to exhibit today.

It is for that reason that I found this summer with the Alcuin Interns so encouraging. Beyond the benefit of female comradery, I also gained great hope for the future by observing our Alcuin Interns. Here are three reasons why:

- 1. They are well-read** – Only [37 percent](#) of America's young people are proficient in reading. At the adult level, fully [one-quarter](#) didn't read a single book last year, and those who did were most likely to read some form of [popular fiction](#).

Not so with the Alcuin Interns. Many of them recognize the value of reading and embrace such writers as Shakespeare,

Aristotle, and C.S. Lewis. They have a love for learning and recognize that the ideas of the past are applicable to the present. They understand that being well-rounded in their reading will expand their minds and help them wrestle with the deep questions and challenges life will present them.

2. They know how to disagree in a civil manner – Today's headlines are filled with students who stage protests, get into shouting matches, and are offended by any opinion that doesn't coincide with their own.

The Alcuin Interns, however, welcome debate and discussion. They have found any number of areas in which they disagree with each other, yet have still been able to discuss religious beliefs, gender roles, birth control, and other contentious topics in a congenial fashion, expressing a desire to learn and grow from one another.

3. They know how to have fun – Several years ago, [Carol Burnett](#) noted that many comedians no longer know how to produce good, clever humor. Instead, they tend to rely on crassness. [More recently](#), other comedians have noted how difficult it is to use humor effectively for fear of offending or being accused of bullying.

The Alcuin Interns are not mean, yet they also aren't afraid to joke and laugh at one another's idiosyncrasies. I believe this is due in large part to the time they have invested in getting to know each other. Instead of confining themselves to the superficial as many are so prone to do, they have grown together as friends and become like a small family, embracing the joy and laughter that come with that close bond.

American young people today are generally viewed as incompetent, privileged, and self-interested individuals whose eventual leadership will spell doom for our nation. However, I saw a completely different side of today's young people in the Alcuin Interns who worked for Intellectual Takeout this

summer.

If we as a nation can redirect more young people down the paths of education, civil debate, and joy that these Interns are learning to tread, then perhaps the future isn't as bleak as we've been led to believe. And that should fill all of our hearts with hope.

[Image Credit: Flickr-Ben Seidelman CC BY 2.0]