This internship has been by far the most exciting and stimulating work experience that I have had so far in college, and will probably prove the most instructive in the course of my future work. The work has been engaging and productive, and the team I have been working on is phenomenal, though the level of intensity at a weekly magazine at the top of its field can be overwhelming. My best experiences have been those that involved an engagement with various parts of the sales team at The New Yorker, while the greatest challenge has been having enough confidence to go above and beyond the tasks required of me.

The highlights of my experience have been research, sales interaction, and event work. The central task of my internship has been a series of research projects given to me by my supervisor, to help her break accounts ranging from vast companies like Starbucks to small, independent New York businesses. Putting together information on these companies and their advertising interests and tendencies, pulling from a series of media databases and general research, has been a crash course in how to determine the marketability of a brand in relation with a potential advertising account. Communicating directly with potential accounts is both the most difficult and the most rewarding activity. Essentially, cold-calling businesses and trying to sell them advertising space requires every bit of people-skills and friendly charm I can muster, plus a confidence in what I am selling and all the information about the magazine to help represent it as a great place to advertise. A lot of people simply don’t want to hear what is being offered, and many are interested but simply don’t have the funds for an expensive magazine. I did not, ultimately, meet one of my original goals of independently selling a piece of advertising in the magazine, though I did aid in the acquisition of several new accounts. Working at New Yorker events was perhaps the best aspect, as I got to work with a different group of people on
the events team, meet interesting clients and other guests, and see amazing speakers, including eloquent journalists and other public figures. These events inspired me more than anything else in the internship to pursue a career in publishing, a world full of fascinating people and ideas, and a vibrant, striving energy.

The biggest challenge I faced was overcoming personal hesitance to engage wholeheartedly in such a competitive and driven world. The hardest part of working at The New Yorker was seizing the initiative and demanding more serious and difficult work, especially when the stakes are so high and serious money is involved. At a weekly magazine, the pace at which everything moves makes the pressure immense and constant, and tempers often run short. While my team was very friendly and patient, the office in general could be a stressful place, especially on Mondays. In this context, I was comfortable asking for more work but a bit hesitant about the extent to which I could get involved. For example, I wanted to go on more sales calls to the client’s office, but the functioning of the sales team I was working with meant this was not often possible in the rush of the day-to-day. While it was always possible to do more, I tended to be hesitant, reluctant to ask more of people in an environment where efficiency was paramount.

Despite this challenge, I made a series of great connections and learned a lot of new skills. From researching potential accounts, to cold-calling, and general marketing demeanor, I had a crash course in sales. I also learned every step of the process by which the magazine and the ads are laid out before going to press, which had been one of my original goals.

Two added benefits that I should mention are the relationship with the editorial side of the magazine, and the intern seminars. Each week, I got to read the coming week’s issue long before the rest of the world got to see it (so that the sales team could better describe the content of the magazine to their advertisers). Seeing the unedited drafts by great writers that I admire
was a surreal experience, not to mention a sheer joy. The intern seminars were organized by Conde Nast, the parent company of The New Yorker and many other magazines, and included amazing lectures from editors and publishers of GQ, Self, and Vanity Fair. This allowed for some incredibly inspiring speeches, as well as some exposure to the work of other magazines.

The people I met throughout the internship made it an eye-opening experience in terms of how I want my future career to unfold. As I have mentioned, interacting (even briefly) with these incredible journalists was inspiring. Also, the sales team I worked on was made of three driven and professional salespeople, fiercely good at their jobs and incredibly effective. Even more importantly, they all seemed to really enjoy their work, and the environment of the office, despite a significant dose of stress, was generally a fulfilling one to work in. I also talked with a freelance sales representative who works in arts and performance advertising, a field that I am especially interested in, and with the publisher’s assistant, who was only a couple years out of college and a good example of what I might want to do in the future. All of these people were open and engaging, and presented various models of careers not only in this field, but in any business field where a high quality of work and dedication is necessary.

I have by no means decided what kind of career I will pursue after college, but I am seriously interested in the work done on the business side of a great magazine in a way that I have not been interested by any other career path. I plan to pursue such work over the rest of my time at college, and continue my relationship with the great people I worked with at The New Yorker. I am so grateful to the Columbia Arts Experience for making this possible.