

Interview with SEO Intern Amy Li



Background: Amy is a rising senior at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts where she is pursuing a BS in Business Administration with a concentration in Real Estate. Prior to her internship with Clarion, Amy served as a financial audit and analysis student consultant for Gear Communications and a leasing operations intern at Essex Property Trust.

Q: What would you like your Clarion colleagues to know about you that they wouldn't find on your resume?

AL: I used to be an environmental science kid in high school – I competed in Science Olympiad, worked on many environmental projects, etc. And so, I always felt that I needed to put that into use by going to college as a bio major and following the traditional pre-med route. But at the same time, I was also helping with my parent's rental properties and as I was learning the ins and outs of property management, I became really conflicted on what I wanted to do full-time. While I applied to several colleges as a bio major and the remaining colleges as a business major, in the end, I decided to attend Babson College. What I love about Babson is that it's an entrepreneurial school and they offer various hands-on experiences in the business field. Ultimately, I'm glad I chose this path and I personally think it was the right choice for me because now I'm always very excited to see and learn how environmental sciences is incorporated into CRE through ESG initiatives and underwriting aspects.

Q: With the SEO program, you had several great internship options. What sparked your interest in Clarion?

AL: I did my research and there were many consistent reviews on Clarion's positive culture, the integration of different teams within the company, and how much people enjoyed working with their teams, which is something that I have realized is extremely important. Now, having experienced several weeks working at Clarion, I can also vouch for all the positive reviews on the company culture. In addition, I was drawn to the rotational aspect of the internship to maximize my learning opportunities and the fact that I could try working in New York City. So overall, this is a really great opportunity and Clarion checked off many of my boxes.

Q: What have you learned/has surprised you the most?

AL: I always knew that research was a critical aspect of many fields, but in real estate it's especially important. I know Clarion is one of the few real estate firms that has a dedicated and separate research department. During my acquisitions rotation, I noticed that a lot of the resources utilized during the due diligence process came directly from Clarion's research team and that really drove home to me how critical research is when making investment decisions. I believe that research is one of the drivers for the success of any CRE firm.

Q: What has been your favorite part of the internship so far?

AL: During my last week with Clarion's acquisitions team, I had a coffee chat with Jonathan Panzures where I mentioned I was interested in gaining more hands-on experience with underwriting. And that very same afternoon, he asked if I wanted to work on some sensitivity analysis on this model for a PIM that they were presenting the following week. And that was my favorite moment thus far because it showed just how supportive the team was in ensuring I had as many learning opportunities as possible during my time with them. I left the office smiling and I knew this is exactly the type of team I want to work with in the future i.e., colleagues who are supportive and value opportunities to learn/acquire new skills.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

AL: I definitely want to stay within CRE because there's a wealth of knowledge to acquire, no matter where you are in your career. Every property you work on is going to be different — it could be a different sector, it could be allocated to a different fund, etc. The amount of exposure and knowledge you gain in CRE is endless, so essentially, I don't think I will ever be bored in this field. And in 10 years, I hope to be in a position where I can be mentoring people who are in my spot right now and looking to break into CRE. It's been heart-warming being able to experience first-hand how much my Clarion colleagues genuinely care about my experience here and what skills I'm leaving the internship with which I hope to be able to pass onto others in the future.