Throughout my intern experience at World Relief I have learned so much. Starting with the basics I have learned about refugees who are people that are fleeing their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership or politics. Before my time at World Relief I honestly didn’t know what a refugee was, but now I feel incredibly well versed in the refugee crisis around the world. I know about the long process that has to occur for someone/families to receive refugee status and how less than one percent of refugees actually get granted refugee status to live in a “third country” such as the United States. I have gotten to hear many first hand stories of life in refugee camps that are totally heartbreaking. My knowledge of geography and politics has greatly increased. Every time I meet a new refugee I ask about their country and where they came from. It has been beneficial for me to increase my knowledge about Asia, Africa and the Middle East. I have been propelled to learn further about the conflicts within the different countries. A lot of the time I come home and research the conflicts that I knew nothing about in the morning before I interned. The Congo and Eritrea are the two countries and conflicts that interest me greatly. My goal this summer is to read a book about each of the countries and conflicts that I have learned about through the refugees that I have encountered. In general my knowledge of the refugee crisis, geography and politics has grown exponentially.

Most of my internship tasks have me working with governmental and healthcare agencies. In the first month or two our clients have a few different appointments that they have to go to in order for them to become a functioning part of society and America. These appointments include the Social Security office, The Department of Social and Health Services
and lots of medical appointments. Having to deal with these organizations has taught me a great
deal. As a sociology major we talk about the ‘system’ a great deal, experiencing these places first
hand I have seen how messed up the systems truly are. The health care system seems like a
bunch of hoops and rings you have to jump through to get anywhere. You have to make sure you
go to the right Social Security worker so you are not treated like the biggest inconvenience in the
world. I have spent many hours in the wasteland of DSHS waiting four hours for a five minute
appointment because they have two people working with a lobby full of people. I aspire to work
in the field of social work in the future so although it was frustrating dealing with the varying
messed up systems I believe it has prepared and taught me for some of the hurdles to come.

My absolute favorite part of the internship was the amazing people I got to meet and the
stories I was able to hear. Each day I walk out with a larger world view and more joy in my
heart. Two specific clients have taught me a lot, despite their age. Six year old Amirhoessin
from Iran and five year old Oskarr from Iraq, display how childhood friendship can cross
restrictive boundaries. The boy’s home countries are not the “best of friends” but that hasn’t
stopped them from becoming just that. Their friendship illuminates what can happen if we allow
ourselves to cross over boundaries and limits that are set up in society because of skin color,
race, religion, gender, or ethnicity. The other day I saw the boy’s from afar playing basketball at
their apartment complex; I couldn’t help but to get a huge smile on my face. All of the sudden
the boys spotted me and started running my direction. Both gave me a giant hug and then stuck
out their hands offering me a ‘Now and Later’ from their pockets. I believe we all need to take a
hint from Amirhoessin and Oskarr. To lay down our differences, reconcile with one another and
realize that the same red blood is flowing through us all. When reconciliation occurs we are able
to realize the important things in life, such as a shared love for ‘Now and Laters’.
It was really hard to think of things that I didn’t like about working with World Relief. I have really enjoyed every part of the experience even the difficult aspects, because I have taken them as growing and learning experiences. Sometimes the communication from the caseworkers to the interns is a bit flawed. This gets pretty frustrating at times. The details are really important for each appointment so if the caseworker does not supply adequate or correct information the whole appointment or task can get messed up which in turn reflects badly on the intern.

I feel like I have contributed a lot to the organization. I follow directions, show up on time and often do more than is expected. I am constantly asking employees and co-workers if there is anything that I can help with and I know they appreciate that a lot. All of the employees make it very clear that they couldn’t do their job without the interns. We take care of the long appointments and the monotonous paperwork which allows the caseworkers to focus on their work that is more vital and so that they can simply get more done. It is really nice to know how appreciated we are as interns. The office is definitely a safe learning environment. The employees take time out of their day to teach us about things that apply to the organization, the different systems and how World Relief runs. It is such a cool office to be in because they are all so passionate about the clients, learning, teaching and their jobs, it is a very positive environment that is seeking after Christ fully.

After interning at World Relief for six months I am able to see my professional skills much clearer. I have realized how much I love organizing and need things to be organized in order for me to be successful at a task. I am very task focused but leave a lot of room for relationships. I think I am pretty good at balancing between relationships and tasks which is very valuable in the professional world. World Relief has given me the unique opportunity to work with a diverse population, through this I am able to learn, grow and be transformed by these encounters. This is
a professional strength because I work well with an array of different people. A professional ability of mine that still needs some work and improvement is my timing. I always cut things really close and run the risk of being late. If I actually make it on time, I arrive stressed out because I am worried that I might be late. I am working on giving myself more time and breathing room when I am going places.

I know that I am called to work with people. I definitely see myself as a social worker or in a position such as that. There are three populations that I can see myself working with in the future; homeless, refugees or in the foster care system. After college I know I want to go and travel. Perhaps even work with an organization such as the Peace Corp. I adore learning and growing from other cultures and being immersed in a totally new culture would be so transforming and stretching. I observe the case workers at World Relief and I can totally envision myself in their shoes. I am passionate about issues of social justice and I know I am called to work that pursues and seeks after justice.

I think that there are many ways that your calling is able to use your career. Personally I know I am called to stand for the vulnerable and against injustice. I can bring these issues into my workplace to increase awareness and let my passion speak for itself. I would also say by being fully invested in each of the tasks that I am involved in. By doing this I am able to glorify God even through the minuscule seemingly unimportant tasks. I am so thankful for the opportunity to intern at World Relief. I have learned so much, met amazing people, heard incredible stories and have eaten delicious meals. I have discovered a clearer path to follow in terms of career. It has been so beneficial being in a non-profit office and seeing how it runs on a day to day basis. I have received an incredible amount of hands on experience and have grown tremendously as an individual.