

If you're interested in The BrandLab, Lab Fellows Program (for recent college grads), you're in the right place. Going into it, right after college graduation, I was very thankful and optimistic about the opportunity. Although, I didn't fully know what great experiences I would be encountering. I'm writing to you today in hopes to give you a deeper understanding of what the program is and to share some of my experiences.

The program is an 8-month long experience, where you rotate through four different companies (two agencies, two corporations). There are 16 "Fellows" total, and you will be placed into groups of four. You and your cohort (the four of you) will rotate through the companies together. In each cohort, there will be two management fellows and two creative fellows. Sometimes you will work together as a cohort (get to know each other, they are super cool people), but you will most likely be working individually. At each rotation you will have a supervisor who is an employee of the company you are at. They will most likely be the one teaching you about the company, their role and giving you projects. You will have weekly checking-ins, if not daily, and they will most likely be in many of the meetings you will be able to attend. They also are a great resource to help you network with others in the company, since they know many other employees in different departments. While you are interning, you will probably work with other teams too, not just the team your supervisor is a part of.

Keep in mind, throughout the program you will have checking-ins and some sessions here and there with The BrandLab staff. You will also get a mentor through The BrandLab and be a part of a small group with that mentor with 4 other fellows. I really appreciated my mentor as they were so supportive, relatable and a great resource. My group could have chatted for hours and hours, when we met!

### **Here are the four companies during my year as a Fellow, and a bit about them:**

**Essence Global** - Global Media Agency - They use "analytics and technology to create valuable, relevant, and trustworthy advertising" ([essenceglobal.com](http://essenceglobal.com)). They do not create the content (like creative agencies) but rather use data, tech and creative ideas to help their client companies succeed. Some of their big clients are: Google, NBC Universal, Airbnb, Target and Peloton.

**Wunderman Thompson** - Creative Media Agency - WT promotes themselves as "part agency, part consultancy and part technology company". They "inspire growth by applying inspiration everywhere across the consumer journey" ([wundermanthompson.com](http://wundermanthompson.com)). Some of their big clients are: Coca-cola, Tommy Hilfiger, KitKat, and Unilever.

**Best Buy** - Technology Store - "Our purpose is to enrich lives through technology. We do that by leveraging our unique combination of tech expertise and human touch to meet our customers' everyday needs" ([bestbuy.com](http://bestbuy.com)). Their in-house, creative teams act similar to creative agencies since they concept and create most of their own work.

**Optum** - Health Care - "Each day we strive to shape a health care system that works better for your whole health" (optum.com). Partnership with United Health Group. They have a surplus of services for their B2B and B2C consumers. There is OptumRx, OptumCare and more. Each sector tends to manage their own marketing. OptumRx has worked with agencies such as Wunderman Thumpson. Some of Optum's creative work is done in-house as well.

### **My experiences:**

I started off at Essence, and was placed on the Business Development team. I was thankful for this placement, even though it was not design related (I am a graphic design major), because I learned a ton about how agencies work. I specifically learned how the process works of trying to win over new clients for the agency. This was super interesting, as some of the clients we were trying to win were huge companies and it blew my mind that we were even discussing them. Also, my BD team (love them) was out of New York, which was super cool (everything was still virtual).

Next, I went to Wunderman Thompson and was placed on a creative team. Many of the supervisors were creative directors and I got to learn more about what that role means. During this rotation I was able to add a few projects to my design portfolio. I created an email ad, some UX design practice (and met with a UX designer once a week), and catalog practice pages. My cohort and I also created an entire pitch from a real client brief that they received. (A real pitch but was used for practice experience for us.) We did all the work including strategy development, creating the content, making the deck and presenting it to 40+ employees at WT. I learned a lot about agency work from this and created great relationships with my cohort and some of the staff guiding us along for the pitch.

Next, I rotated to Best Buy. I thought I knew a decent amount about them prior to interning there, but being on the internal creative team was way cooler than expected. Their internal creative team acts kind of like an agency, but smaller, and they focus on just their brand. I've learned Best Buy also does a lot of advocating for others whose voices are not always heard. Here, my supervisor did a ton of work with video production and was also a copywriter. It was super interesting to be a part of video production work and gave me a taste of something I might be interested in for the future. I got to see actors trying out for the roles and see the takes on filming day (virtually). I also met with the design team, copywriters and the social team. My other creative fellow and I worked both together and independently to create concepts and designs for social media use.

Optum - (This was my last rotation and I have not had the experience yet, so another Fellow saved the day and wrote about their experience here.) Just to make one thing clear, I entered the program as a marketing management fellow. I was placed in the Corporate Marketing Team, mainly working on health equity initiatives. I conducted the health equity consumer personae, assisted in writing social posts, read through numerous analyses and studies to propose a social channel plan and bench marked Optum's competitors. This rotation was where I learned and grew my skills the most- how to enhance my presentation building skills, how to show up in

different settings, how to advocate for myself and so much more. One thing that surprised me the most, coming from someone with small business experiences, was the revision/approval process. The presentations and social posts I created went through 4-7 revisions until I could present them to other teams and until it went to the public. In addition, I met many hardworking individuals at Optum and at UHG who were open to tell me about their career journey and more. I wasn't just observing, I was also integrated into the teams and came out learning more than I expected.

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