KARL A. WASHINGTON III

2023 ALUMNI

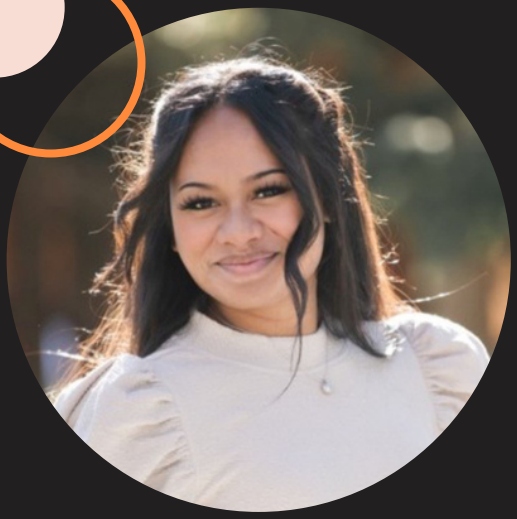
The BrandLab introduced me to the possibilities of a career in the creative arts. I've been interested in art since childhood, and The BrandLab highlighted how my natural skills can contribute to a lucrative career. Before my experience as an intern with The BrandLab, I was shy and afraid to stand out in a room. I was soft-spoken and reluctant to share my ideas. My first professional job experience came from The BrandLab. I learned about professionalism, the various aspects of advertising, and teamwork. Learning from industry professionals and sharing my thoughts with educational professionals were some of my most valuable experiences.

My experience with The BrandLab taught me that I am more than an artist. I am a leader. The BrandLab helped to develop my confidence and helped me to be open to constructive feedback. The BrandLab experience better prepared me for my college experience. I became more outgoing and eager to meet new people. I entered college, ready to connect and engage with my peers and professors. My first professional connection in college was with the Dean of Student Services, and I have continued to build this connection. I have become more comfortable with being uncomfortable and speaking up, asking questions, and trying new things.

The BrandLab helped me gain confidence in my voice. I recognize more than ever why my voice matters and question the voices that are missing. Since starting college, I have realized how much people of color are underrepresented in predominantly white institutions and the need for belongingness. Social justice appeals to me. I am an active member of the Black Student Union and advocate for activities celebrating Black culture. I want to be a leader for change in advocating for marginalized populations. I want to use my creative abilities to bring light to social issues and the beauty of culture. The BrandLab opened the door for me, and I want to do the same for others someday.

SERINGA McHUGH

2023 ALUMNI



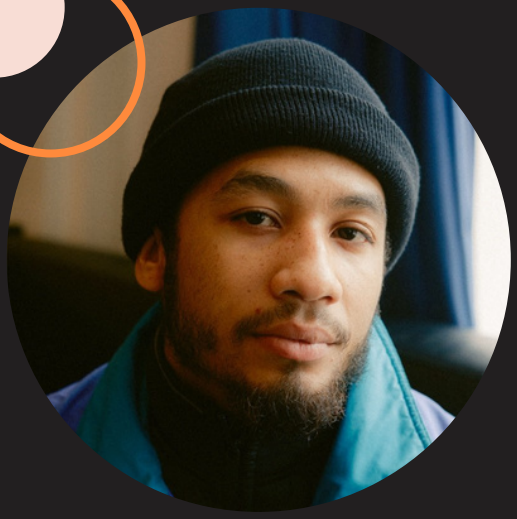
Being a creative fellow in The Brandlab Fellowship has been an awesome journey so far! Throughout this remarkable experience, I've had the opportunities to connect and collaborate with a variety of talented individuals from Knock Inc. and Target. I've been working with Target's A&A, Beauty, and Pets team and closely with my supervisor, Kelsey Lindhort, everyday.

While engaging in collaborative projects with other creatives, I've learned a lot of lessons so far. Every challenge I have faced has turned into a chance to learn, making my design skills better and helping me approach different creative situations. One of the best parts of the Fellowship program is that it gives me a chance to show what I can do and also learn from others. Additionally, everyone that I've been working with has been supportive and welcoming which can be hard to find in other workplaces, especially as a POC.

As I keep going on this adventure of creativity, teamwork, and always learning, I'm excited to keep being a part of new projects.

ZION BULLOCK

2023 ALUMNI



I am so grateful for The BrandLab.It gave me the ability to visualize a global future for myself and my city. This internship gave me the validation I needed in my skills. Every project was a chance for me to see how well I can execute tasks at my fullest ability. I am ever so grateful for this opportunity to project myself in spaces I once thought were impossible to get into. Thank you to The BrandLab for providing a platform for me to develop and reshape my future.

HANUEL SEO SKY

2022 ALUMNI

I first connected with TBL through a recommendation from my professor. She especially brought this opportunity up to students in minor races.

My internship was a great opportunity for me, who is an international. Unfortunately, because International students need more opportunities to have career experience, especially in the Midwest Area, because of visa problems, many companies are reluctant because of different processes than local people. However, I could start my career with this internship opportunity, and I got to prove myself with my work ethic, eventually getting offered an extended job as a part-time graphic designer during the school year.
The internship impacted me in a few ways. First of all, it opened my career. With that being said, I could get more reputation in this industry, getting more work experience that I couldn't have done before as an international student.

Secondly, It gave me confidence. I used to wonder whether I was good enough to work as a graphic designer. However, participating in as many mentorship programs by TBL as possible, I realized that work skill is important and other factors such as work ethic, enthusiasm, and passion are important. I could prove myself to the company I worked for and get a better reputation with those aspects.

My next steps are to have one more year of job experience in this industry after graduation and will apply to Grad school for UX design study.

Starting a career is a huge challenge, especially as an international student, due to the visa process here in Milwaukee. But TBL opened the door for me to get access to the challenge. Overall, Being exposed to the challenge of equity for the international community led to access to the workplace, and access to starting my career, allowed me to show my talent and work ethics that are not well visible on paper.

JESSE LARA

2022 ALUMNI

I have engaged in the highschool internship program, where I interned with Target Creative. I also participated in the college beyond program, where I interned at Renewal by Andersen. I first engaged with The BrandLab at the end of my senior year of highschool– which was a little over a year ago!

An experience that definitely stood out to me was my senior highschool internship. I made some great friends, discovered the vast and mysterious world of marketing, and set myself ahead of most people my age.

TBL has quite frankly changed my life. I learned that working in marketing is something I love and am great at. However, I made connections during my internships that would change my life. My made connections with art directors, creative directors, photographers, designers, and other really great people. Two of my managers (art directors) helped me connect with Susan Wehmann (Past CEO of Wehmann Talent) in person, of which I got picked up by her agency within a week. Besides that, my managers at Target helped me land a production assistant role at other shoots just by simply recommending me! In my case, I got into the world of modeling and acting because of my managers– and have excelled in it, despite only being in it for just over a year. I also learned how to step out of my comfort zone and take risks by constantly working on real life problems and people in my internships. I will also note that TBL has helped me land more internships becuase of my real world experience that I gained while at TBL.

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OM HARRIS

2021 ALUMNI

I first heard about The BrandLab (TBL) in 2019, when I was in my junior year of high school. Shalisa Wilson came to my school, Southwest High School, and introduced the program tomy classmates and I. She encouraged me to enroll in the summer marketing internship. I was skeptical at first due to not having a clear sense of direction. I had professional experiences working at Juxtaposition as an apprentice graphic designer and at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts working as an art team member. I had little knowledge of marketing. My interest was particularly in Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustration Softwares. However, I decided to be involved in the TBL internship program as I was open-minded.

All my three internship experiences at TBL impacted my career, they brought a clearer outlook on my path; I wish to become an industrial designer. During my internships, I have been able to learn, explore, ask questions, and gain more confidence in my choice of career. I know now that work experience, skill building, and making connections are critical to getting a job in my track field. For instance, at BLUDOT, I have learned the importance, as a designer, to always maintain a portfolio. I worked on a project that involved sketching out a product and many different samples to make a 3D model prototype. The prototype would only be used for testing. It would be transferred over and be finalized by the rest of the team and specifically the creative director. Together they would decide whether or not this would be suitable for the company's goal and the clients interest. I could not have known all of the knowledge I've acquired had I not been involved in interning. Even though my time at BLUDOT was to mainly focus on marketing, I was able to talk to the in-house Industrial designers.

JOSLIN WYATT

2019 ALUMNI

Joslin was a senior in high school when first introduced to The BrandLab in 2019. Eager to get involved, she applied for The BrandLab's summer internship program. She was matched for an internship at Hallmark Cards Inc. corporate office as a General Marketing intern. In 2020, when TBL went virtual, Joslin interned at H&R Block with a focus on strategy. In 2021, she interned at Trozzolo as a Digital Marketing Intern. She then graduated from Northwest Missouri State University (2022) and is now a Content Marketing Studio (CMS) Account Lead at Hallmark Cards Inc. Joslin also serves on the TBL x KC Alumni Board.

TBL x KC introduces, guides, and prepares young people of color for successful careers in marketing and advertising. We provide access to these careers through paid internships for 15-25 year olds so they can gain career-specific professional development in classroom settings and hands-on work experiences in agency and corporate settings. Just as important, TBL helps employers build more equitable and inclusive workplaces, where diverse talent can feel a sense of belonging that leads to sustainable careers.

ANTHONY SILVA

2019 ALUMNI

Anthony heard about TBL in the Spring of 2019 from Lamah, a good friend of his at UW-River Falls, where they were in the same program. Lamah introduced Anthony to Thomas Toley, at that time TBL's program manager (now the TBL x Twin Cities Executive Director). A week later, Anthony had an interview with Thomas and TBL, and that's when his journey began.

Anthony's first TBL internship was with Broadhead as a project management intern in the summer of 2019. He had his second internship in the summer of 2020 with Best Buy amidst the pandemic. Then, Anthony joined the pandemic-era apprentice program (October 2020—February 2021) working on the partnership of Planned Parenthood & KNOCK, a role he says supported him considerably and provided him with significant growth in his career. After that, Anthony stepped outside his comfort zone and gained a creative internship with KNOCK in the summer of 2021.

Fast forward to 2022/23: Anthony is now a The BrandLab Fellow, where he is participating in an even more robust on-the-job experience over 6-8 months for recent college graduates.

"TBL has impacted my career, where I ultimately see the big picture," says Anthony, "from the structures of the campaign, to the cross-collaboration, and even how consumer behaviors and marketing dollars are shifting today." Anthony's wealth of experience has set him up well for a job in the field.

WESLEY DEAN

2018 ALUMNI

My experience with TBL mostly comes through the College & Beyond Program, where I've had two internships. I started in high school back in 2018 with Magnet 360. I took a break from the TBL as I was exiting high school and entering college, the pandemic hit, and most internship programs had shut down, but entering my junior year in the summer of 2021, I had been placed in Colle McVoy's design team, 10 Thousand Design. This was the first time I had truly applied in my design career, now having two years of design school experience under my belt, I had finally been able to use what I've learned and be resourceful to a business. It was a great experience, and seeing how a large business to consumer agency had worked, it was exciting. I met a lot of great people and finally got to see the "glamorous" side of advertising. My next internship with TBL was with a food and agricultural advertising agency called Curious Plot. I was placed along with one other TBL intern, and we turned into very close friends. Curious Plot served as a great launch pad from just graphic design into other holistic elements that are involved in advertising, from social media to campaign development. My time with Curious Plot garnered a lot of close connections with established business professionals, and a lot of great memories.

Beyond the financial and professional benefits, TBL has given me the opportunity to earn a chance to be a voice of change in the industry. TBL's mission has really reflected on me in every positive way. The experience gained through seminars and internships has empowered me to be my truest and most authentic self at work. I used to feel nervous whenever I would speak up, I lacked the confidence to raise my voice, especially whenever something in the realm of equity was brought up, but now I am eager to speak up, I'm eagar to make a difference.

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WILLIAM XIONG

2016 ALUMNI

I first encountered The BrandLab as a sophomore in high school back in 2013. At that point, I was uncertain about my future and had little understanding of the different business departments. All I knew was that I didn't want to be in sales and wanted to pursue something creative. The BrandLab came into our class for a month, guiding us through a project to create a campaign. I quickly fell in love with the process and realized this was a path I wanted to follow.

Since 2019, I've completed two internships with The BrandLab, where I gained invaluable experience across non-profit, corporate, and agency settings. These opportunities provided real-world experience that I couldn't have gotten from college alone. Thanks to The BrandLab, securing a job after graduation was much easier.

Additionally, I am a TBL scholarship recipient. As a first-generation Hmong student, there were times when my family struggled to cover my tuition. The BrandLab's support was crucial in helping me continue my education.

I truly don't know where I would be without them.

TESS MONTGOMERY

2011 SUPPORTER

I started college at Drake in 2011 as an Elementary Education major. After my first semester, I quickly realized that the career path wasn't for me - especially with the limited resources surrounding urban education, which is where my passion lies (Que my 1st existential crisis).

During my new career exploration phase I started taking random intro classes to see what I might be interested in doing. During a visit home, my grandma set up a meeting with Adaobi Okolue – a former Program Manager at TBL. We met over lunch and had a great conversation about the world of Advertising, Marketing, and PR. My interest peaked, and she invited me to a speed networking session TBL was having in a few days.

I met with the current cohort and Adaobi at Carmichael Lynch and we took a bus to Fallon. There I was able to meet CEOs, creatives, account directors, account managers, supervisors, etc. It was during this session that I realized I just might have a passion for Advertising and immediately changed my major when I returned to Drake.

Since that day, I haven't looked back! I did super well in my Advertising and Marketing courses. The material genuinely interested me, and I was ecstatic to break into the agency world, especially as a person of color where I saw an opportunity to bring new perspectives. I had an internship at the Integer Group and at the Iowa Events Center in college and had great experiences that affirmed my desire to work in this field.

When I graduated, I was hesitant about going the agency route (que 2nd existential crisis – I wanted my work to feel more “important”), so I combined my passion for marketing and community work and started working in the nonprofit sector doing a variety of communications and marketing work. Six years into my professional career I started looking for agency work and landed a Media Planner role at Preston Spire, where I work with a team to place ads and build performance reports.

Without TBL, I don't think I would have ever known about the Advertising/Marketing industry and felt confident to work in these spaces and realize the value I hold as a BIPOC voice working in this field.

Oh - also, on the bus ride during the networking session I met Travon Sellers. We've stayed in contact ever since, and we recently worked together to build a website for an organization I was doing freelance work for. Forever grateful for that lunch with Adaobi! I can honestly say it changed the trajectory of my life as I had NO CLUE what I wanted to do.