

Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration Diversity and Inclusion Newsletter



DFA Internship Spring 2021

Pictured from left to right: Roberto Ordaz (OCSE), James Crane (Field Audit-Northwest District), Alan McVey (DFA Deputy Director and Chief of Staff), Kali McMahon (Field Audit-Northeast District), Deshawn Parks (Individual Income Tax), Rebecca Almond (Field Audit – Southern District), Thi Nguyen (Excise Tax), Channing Mitchell (Field Audit-Central District), Charlie Collins (DFA Revenue Commissioner)

Volume 01 | Issue 02

Vaccination Bonus

Governor Hutchinson recently announced a vaccine bonus for State Employees. While vaccination is not required, DFA employees are strongly encouraged to receive the COVID vaccine. In order to be eligible for a vaccine bonus, employees must be classified as regular full-time, part-time, or extra help. Those seeking a vaccine bonus will need to submit a copy of their vaccine card with at least one vaccination documented on or before July 1st to DFA HR. The vaccination bonus is a one-time \$200 payment to be disbursed on the July 2nd payroll. (continued on page 11)

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Internship Outcomes

The Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) welcomed its first interns during the fall semester of 2020 and recently concluded the spring internship session in April of this year. Fall and Spring internship sessions last twelve weeks while summer interns work for a ten-week period. The internship program provides students with the opportunity to define their career goals, develop new skills, and build relationships within a culturally accepting environment.

DFA participating divisions include: The Office of Child Support Enforcement, The Office of Excise Tax, The Office of Individual Income Tax Administration, The Office of Field Audit Administration, and The Office of Information Services.

One hundred percent of interns felt that DFA's internship program did an excellent job of better preparing them to enter the workforce. Interns believed they were able to strengthen written and oral communication skills as well as gain meaningful working experience in their area of interest. To date, ten participants have completed the program. Four graduates of the internship program have been hired into full-time positions, and others are currently being considered for full-time employment with DFA.

“Although I was an intern, I always felt welcomed by other employees.”

-Oluwafunmilayo Adediwura

“The most positive thing about my internship is the eagerness of my supervisor to train me. The flexible part-time schedule is another positive thing.”

-Nhung Nguyen

“My auditing class knowledge has been helpful when applying certain techniques, but it can't compare to the knowledge and experience gained with “real world” auditing” (received during DFA internship).

-Kali McMahon

“This experience was eye opening. I've learned so many things, but the biggest thing is learning how to be a professional in the business world.”

-Channing Mitchell

Summer Internship 2021

DFA's summer internship began June 01, 2021 and will last 10 weeks ending on August 06, 2021. Seven interns were accepted for this session. All interns will receive mentorship and guidance in their chosen field of study. The following candidates were selected: Rebecca Almond-Field Audit Southern District, Keira Boop-Individual Income Tax, Jason Caple-Field Audit Central District, Heaven Clary-OCSE, Matthew Collins-Field Audit Northeast District, Patrick Farrell-Individual Income Tax, and Madeline Kittler-OCSE.

Heaven Clary – Office of Child Support Enforcement

I was born here in Little Rock, Arkansas, but I grew up in Warren, Arkansas. My parents are from Arkansas as well, and I have strong ties with all of my family here in Arkansas. I love anything that includes numbers such as math, accounting, and finance. My hobbies include singing and spending time with friends and family.

I graduated from Warren High School May of 2018, and soon afterwards became a panther at the illustrious Philander Smith College. I am currently pursuing my bachelors degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Accounting. I Graduate in December of 2021. I'm Almost there!

After college I would like to begin my career in the accounting field. Even though my goal is to eventually work for the federal government, I believe I would enjoy working for a state government agency or a company in the private sector. There is always an opportunity for you somewhere, and where that opportunity is, is growth!

While attending a local job fair, I came across the Department of Finance and Administration, and I knew immediately that I wanted to intern there. Even though I am a senior, I wanted an internship for various reasons. The most important reason was to gain experience and insight on how a business operates in order to deliver essential services to the public. I also wanted to gain unique exposure through hands-on training. Since being with the Office of Child Support, I have seen passionate individuals that work hard every day to deliver services to those who are in need. This internship has been an eye-opening experience that will forever stick with me.

I have learned the different departments that make up the Office of Child Support and have been given the opportunity to train with each of them. I have also learned how citizens apply for child support services, how aid is transferred from a party and distributed accordingly, and how each department works together to accomplish the same goal. During my time here, I was able to learn how the system works and I was able to work on child support orders.



*Matthew Collins – Office of
Field Audit, Northeast
District*

I attend Arkansas State University where I graduated with an Accounting degree in May 2021. I am currently pursuing a master's degree and plan to graduate in December. I was in band for 2 years at Arkansas State and a member of the Phi Beta Lambda chapter where I competed in various competitions. I was also a Women's Leadership Ambassador and am a member of Journey Church.

After graduating with my master's degree, I want to obtain my CPA license and work as an auditor in either the Jonesboro or Little Rock area.

I was born in Memphis, TN. My parents are Brian and Sheri Collins, and I have a younger brother (Brandon). I graduated from Marion High School. In my spare time, I like watching and playing sports, playing video games, hanging out with friends, playing disc golf, traveling, and playing the trumpet too.

During my internship with Field Audit, I hope to learn more about the auditing process and what auditors must do to check for accuracy in a company's reported taxes. I also hope to gain more knowledge about tax laws and regulations. The most positive thing about my internship has been the hands-on experience and the people I have worked with so far. I also enjoy working in the field at the taxpayer's business.



Madeline Kittler – Office of Child Support Enforcement

My family and I are originally from Forrest City, but I graduated from England High School in 2019. Forrest City is where I found my passion for government work and still make sure to visit as much as possible. I enjoy reading, researching, as well as cuddling at home with my pets.

Currently, I am enrolled at University of Central Arkansas where I am a double major in Political Science and Public Administration. My favorite class so far

has been political theory, especially modern theory. Taking classes in public administration has convinced me that working for the government is the direction I want take after graduation.

The internship at OCSE first caught my attention because during the past school year I focused on government budgeting. Learning about Child Support and how it is executed under the Department of Finance was the perfect opportunity for me to expand my knowledge of government budgeting/purchasing in real life. I am not typically a “math” person, but I knew I would learn so much from the people at OCSE. Working with purchase orders, purchase requests, financial statements/reports, as well as creating long term change for the office has proved incredibly rewarding. I have enjoyed my coworkers, the other interns, as well as my supervisors. Child Support is full of wonderful people helping those that need it.



Keira Boop – Office of Individual Income Tax

I'm from Little Rock, AR. I graduated from Little Rock Central High in 2019, and I am currently studying political science at Hendrix College. In my spare time, I enjoy martial arts, art, and hiking. I am interested in careers in government and in law.

I wanted to intern with DFA to get a better understanding of state government in general, and of revenue in particular. In many of my college classes, we discuss the ramifications of government programs, but we rarely examine how the money to fund those programs is generated to begin with. Interning with DFA has helped close those gaps for me. So far, I have worked on several research projects for the Individual Income Tax division, harnessing my existing experience with policy research and legislative histories. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the people in my division, and I admire their dedication to their work and to the taxpayers. I am looking forward to the remainder of my internship here at the Arkansas Department of finance and Administration.



Jason Caple – Office of Field Audit, Central District

I attend Henderson State University in Arkadelphia and will be graduating in December 2021 with an Accounting degree. While in college, I have enjoyed participating in many School of Business events as well as Henderson student activities.

I was born in Benton and graduated from Harmony Grove High School in Haskell. I have one older brother. In my spare time, I enjoy hiking and canoeing.

After graduation, I look forward to getting my MBA from Henderson and becoming a CPA. During my internship, I hope to observe an entry interview with a taxpayer, tour a manufacturing facility, and attend an administrative hearing. I think it will be interesting to learn how the auditors conduct themselves in each of these situations. My most positive experience with this internship so far is meeting new people and learning about the different roles and positions within the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration.



Patrick Farrell – Office of Individual Income Tax

I was born in Little Rock but moved to California when I was young. My father is an Arkansan through and through, and my mother is from New Jersey. I love to travel to new places and learning about different cultures as well as being outside every chance I get. I graduated from Moreno Valley High School in California in December of 2012 a semester early. I currently attend UALR for a degree in Accounting with a predicted graduation of May 2022. I have switched my degree 2 times, hence the long period in school.

My end goal is to work for the Federal Government as a Forensic Accountant or working in the private sector working for an auditing firm. My hope is to make sure my future family is taken care of.

I could have applied for a job working for the school or a business, but it felt like the options that were out there were more of filler positions where I wouldn't be doing much. Instead I applied with the Income Tax division to learn firsthand how to investigate and audit in the real world that would have a real impact.

Taxes are confusing if you haven't been instructed on them. With this information that I am gaining I am also helping Arkansans better inform themselves with their taxes.

So far, I have learned a lot about the procedure and finding out that a lot of times the adjustments we make end up helping Arkansans, which is even more of a justification for choosing this path.



Vaccination Bonus Continued

These bonuses are taxed at higher levels, but employees should take home at least \$100.00. To receive the bonus on July 2nd, fax a copy of your vaccination card to DFA HR at 501-683-2174 or email a copy of your vaccination card to erica.miller@dfa.arkansas.gov no later than Wednesday, June 23rd. Information submitted after June 23rd may result in a later payment date. Your vaccination card will be kept confidential.

COVID DAL Reinstated

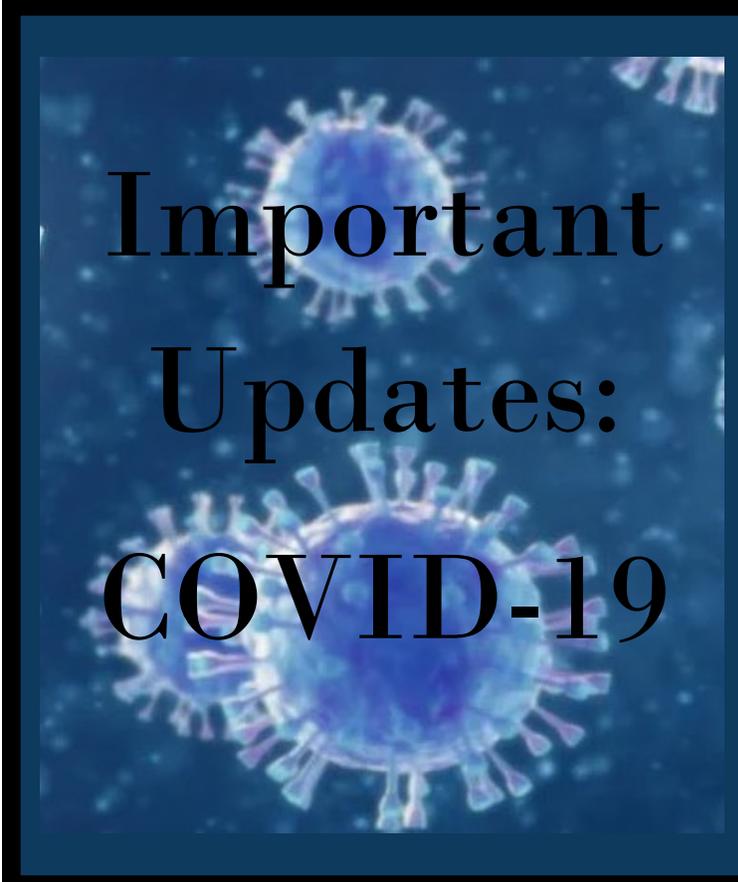
Effective July 1, 2021, COVID Director's Authorized Leave (COVID DAL) has been reinstated for DFA employees. Eligible employees may be granted COVID DAL for up to 80 hours total. Employees who meet one of the following criteria may be eligible:

1. Have an active case of COVID-19
2. Have been directed to quarantine
3. Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and awaiting test results
4. Have been exposed to someone with an active case of COVID-19 and awaiting test results

Requests must include the COVID DAL request form and documentation from the testing facility, Department of Health, of a qualified healthcare provider. The documentatoin must provide the patient's or employee's name and quarantine dates. All requests must be submitted by the employee's supervisor to courtney.brown@dfa.arkansas.gov.

DFA strongly encourages all employees to take the COVID vaccine and will allow eligible employees to use up to one hour total of Director's Authorized Leave to receive the vaccine. Although the COVID vaccine is free to individuals, insurance may be billed if available. Insurance is not required to receive the vaccine.

For questions regarding DAL, employees and supervisors may contact Courtney Brown or visit the DFA HR website at <https://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/human-resources/dfa-hr-forms/>.



**Important
Updates:
COVID-19**

Juneteenth Named National Holiday

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, called for the end of slavery in America. However, the then raging Civil War prevented it from being enacted in much of the American South for months or even years later in some areas. Juneteenth, also known as Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day, celebrates the eventual country-wide realization of the decree in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865. President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law on June 17th of this year officially making Juneteenth a federal holiday in the United States. It is the first new federal holiday since 1983 when Martin King Luther Jr. Day was created.

This commemoration of the emancipation of Black Americans began in Texas but has now been embraced globally. Early Juneteenth celebrations included communal barbecues, picnics, and baseball games. Today, Juneteenth festivities range from a single day that might include parades, concerts, rodeos, street fairs, cookouts, or family reunions to month long celebrations that also include public readings, reenactments, and speeches that aim to educate the public and emphasize achievement. Due to COVID, an increased number of organizations even hosted online celebrations in 2020. However you choose to celebrate Juneteenth, remember to enjoy your family and celebrate your community.

Remember

Juneteenth

June 19, 1865

Celebrate

Saving for Retirement

Have you thought about how to begin building the income you'll need for the future? In a society where employer sponsored pensions are being phased out by employee sponsored 401(k)'s, saving for retirement can seem like an insurmountable challenge. However, employees of the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration are saving by contributing five percent of their annual salaries to the Arkansas Public Employee Retirement System (APERS) each pay cycle. In return the State of Arkansas contributes just over fifteen percent of the employee's annual salary to APERS on the employee's behalf. If an employee leaves within five years, the vesting period, it is recommended that employees do not withdraw their savings as they will lose the state's contribution to their retirement savings.

APERS offers two types of educational seminars each month. The new member class is designed to be an introductory course to the system and is meant to answer questions about how APERS works and what you can expect over the course of your career. Such as how you earn a benefit, how much your benefit will be, and when you can retire. The retirement seminar targets vested members who want to know more about the retirement system and understand what benefits and options are available as you approach retirement. It also covers reciprocity, service credit purchases, the benefit formula, and retirement eligibility. Visit the APERS website for additional information including class availability.

Contact Information



Arkansas Public Employee Retirement System (APERS)
P: 501-682-7800
<https://www.apers.org/>



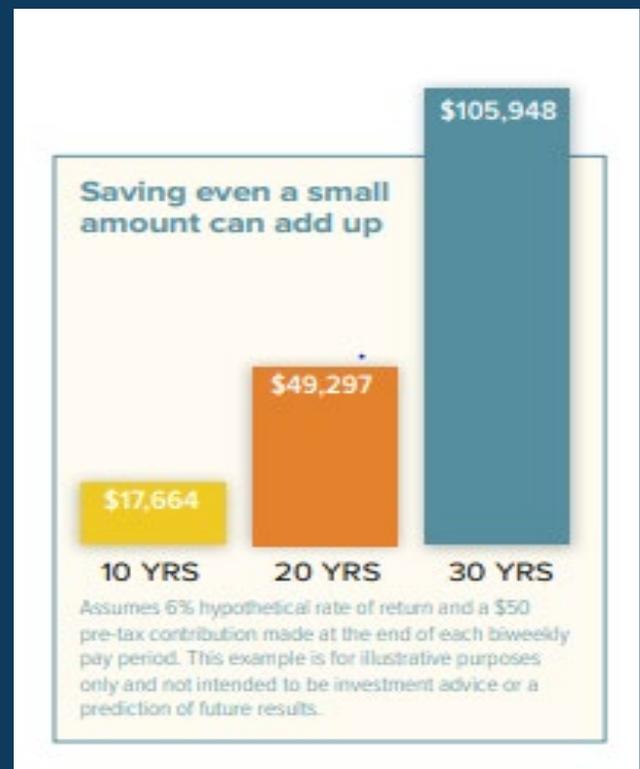
Arkansas Diamond Deferred -Voya
P: 501-301-9900 | 866-271-3327
<https://myplan.voya.com>



DFA Human Resources
P: 501-324-9065 | F: 501-683-2174



Diversity and Inclusion
diversity@dfa.arkansas.gov
<https://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/human-resources/diversity-inclusion-eeo/>



Saving for Retirement

Arkansas Diamond Deferred Compensation Plan (Arkansas Diamond) is a second way DFA employees can save for retirement. Employees are automatically enrolled in this program at a three percent contribution rate but have the option to disenroll. Arkansas Diamond offers enrollees quite a bit of flexibility. Employees can roll over previous retirement savings, control their contribution amounts, choose where their funds are invested, and determine if they will enjoy pre-tax or roth (post tax) savings. Unlike APERS, Arkansas Diamond allows employees to make qualifying withdrawals from their retirement savings account. Upon termination from state employment, employees can continue to manage and make contributions to their Arkansas Diamond accounts. Visit the Arkansas Diamond website for additional information.

Arkansas Diamond Visits in Central Arkansas

| Building | Address | Date | Time |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1509 Building | 1509 West 7 th St, Little Rock, AR 72201 1 st Floor Conference Room #102 | Wednesday, 07/07/2021 | 8:30am – 2:00pm |
| Ledbetter Building | 1816 West 7 th St., Little Rock, AR 72201 2 nd Floor Conference Room #2230 | Thursday, 07/08/2021 | 8:30am – 2:00pm |
| Ragland Building | 1900 West 7 th St., Little Rock, AR 72201 Training Rooms #2021 and #2022 | Wednesday, 07/14/2021 | 8:30am – 2:00pm |
| Mann Building | 322 South Main St., Suite 100 Little Rock, AR 72201 2 nd Floor Lecture Room | Thursday, 07/15/2021 | 8:30am – 12:00pm |

Appointments are not required. Employees will be assisted on a drop-in basis. For additional information contact Erica Miller or Jessica Childress.

Jessica Childress P: (501) 682-0149 | E: Jessica.childress@dfa.arkansas.gov

Erica Miler P: (501) 371-6011 | E: Erica.miller@dfa.arkansas.gov