

Internship Abstract of GA/Orion Communications Office

Intern: Thaeng “Cat” Pate

Dates: August 24-December 11, 2015

My fall internship took place in the Orion Program Communications Office at NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC). This has been one of the best experiences of my life.

Before I started my internship, I met with the Communications team to discuss expectations and a plan to reach mutual goals. I expressed my wish to produce products and publications that I could add to my online portfolio by the end of the internship. The team responded by entrusting me to update some critical program products. I produced the Orion Program monthly newsletter; updated and coordinated the Spanish translation for the Orion overview fact sheet, developed social media content for Facebook and Twitter, and helped to develop Exploration Mission-1 (EM1) branding.

Within the first few weeks of arriving for my internship, I was tasked to complete the graphic layout for the Orion monthly newsletter. Initially, the plan was to collaborate with another graphic designer on the team to learn the process before I was responsible for the layout of a later edition. After discussing the process and reviewing past editions, we agreed to revise the plan. I would be responsible for completing the September newsletter and would call the designer if I needed assistance. I received the written copy, headers, pictures and captions from my mentor. I incorporated previous layouts, created some new layouts and with the designer’s help, I had a draft ready for review in a couple of days. The newsletter was approved and distributed by email to Orion team members and added to the external website.



Figure 1. Sample pages from the Orion September monthly newsletter.

The following month, I was asked to complete the layout of the newsletter again and I happily agreed. I contributed a photograph and article about University of Texas at Tyler engineering students building hardware for an Orion simulator. The rest of the copy and photographs were provided from my mentor and I assembled the layout. The approved newsletter was emailed to the Orion program and added to the external website.



Figure 2. Sample pages from the Orion October monthly newsletter.

The Orion overview fact sheet was created in 2012 and was in need of a major update. I was responsible for redesigning the layout and incorporating a new configuration of the spacecraft, updating the social media sites and including new progress images. The progress images were to focus on Exploration Flight Test-1, Orion's first test flight that occurred December 2014. The images had to be selected from publically released images posted on Orion's Flickr page and *Imagery Online*, the NASA image database.

Updates to the social media sites and the progress images went well, but I had some technical difficulties updating the image of the new Orion Spacecraft. Using the Photoshop software, I recreated the layered image of the Orion crew module over the pressure vessel, nestled within the launch abort system shroud. Unfortunately, laptop assigned to me didn't have enough RAM and processing power to render the high resolution images efficiently. Every time I tried to edit the image, it took 10-15 minutes to render. After struggling with the slow system for a week, I brought in my personal laptop to complete the new image.

After the initial review with the communications manager, I was asked to add other NASA exploration program information to make the fact sheet more versatile. I added the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket that will fly Orion and Ground Services Operations & Development (GSDO) for launch services, all part of the NASA Exploration Program. By adding those programs, the fact sheet could be used by all.

I modified the progress photos so the focus was on progress toward the next mission-- Exploration Mission -1, scheduled to launch in 2018. I went back to Flickr and Imagery Online to search for new images and contacted the SLS and GSDO communication leaders and public affairs officers for images and text reviews. After several weeks of revisions to the text and images, where my mentor was critical to getting the necessary approvals, the overview fact sheet was completed.

Afterwards, I coordinated the translation of English to Spanish using the Hispanic Employee Resources Group and a contact I had in the Public Affairs Office. I replaced the English text with Spanish, received approval for the Spanish version and coordinated the shipment of the products to outreach events in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The English and Spanish versions were added to the external Orion website. It's amazing to me that a product I worked on will be reaching people in different countries.



Figure 3. Orion fact sheet in English (left) and Spanish (right).

I have to admit, I'm not the most social media savvy person. I have personal Facebook and Twitter accounts but I don't post updates often. I was happy to have the opportunity to gather content for the Orion Facebook and Twitter accounts so I could learn a new skill. Per my assignment, I reviewed the nontraditional holidays from the DaysOfTheYear.com website and selected 3-4 holidays each month until the end of the calendar year 2015. I found publically released NASA images online on various nasa.gov and Flickr websites that were relevant to the holiday and wrote tweets and posts. The social media manager reviewed the content and shared it on the official Orion Facebook and Twitter accounts. I also shot a video of myself while on a zero gravity flight that will be used on social media at a later date as part of the Orion Backstage Pass series.



Figure 4. Sample social media content I wrote posted to Orion Facebook page.



Figure 5. Screenshots of my zero gravity flight!

Exploration Mission 1 is three years away and ESD has started to think about how the mission should be communicated to the public. I was surprised and excited to learn that I would be traveling with the Orion team to meet with SLS and GSDO team members at NASA Headquarters for a 2-day workshop focusing on strategy and the EM1 brand. The team agreed to create a draft identifier, artistic style, patch and samples for the team to review in a week. While I was in the Headquarters building, I saw that someone had taped the Orion September monthly newsletter to their wall. I felt a huge sense of pride and accomplishment. Although my draft EM1 designs may not be chosen, I feel like I'll always look upon the final design with the same sense of pride and accomplishment because I was part of the team that developed it.



Figure 6. At NASA Headquarters for a creative workshop on the EM1 brand.

I was fortunate enough to intern with a group who think of interns as part of the creative process and team. I have some great products for my portfolio and I met some truly talented people. My internship with Orion has strengthened my confidence in myself as an artist and I'm ready to start my career in communications.