

## APPRENTICE STORY

# KATELYN

## SKY BLUE BUILDERS

FINANCIAL SERVICES  ACCOUNTING CLERK

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Katelyn excels in school. Enrolled in college courses, she scores high on tests and maintains a 3.9 grade point average. However, she's not as connected to her learning as she wants to be, so she applied for CareerWise's modern youth-apprenticeship program to apply her lessons in a business environment and set her sights on being an accountant. But apprenticeship has widened her vision far beyond a job; now the 17-year-old dreams of studying economics at an Ivy League school—and much more.

## GETTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR

Katelyn attends Colorado Early College and takes most of her classes at the Community College of Aurora. This summer, she will concurrently enroll at the University of Colorado-Denver to study finance. A highly motivated person with big plans for her future, Katelyn saw apprenticeship as a perfect complement to her studies.

“Getting your foot in the door by gaining meaningful work experience and earning college credit at the same time is incredibly beneficial for your career,” she said.

Sky Blue Builders, a general contracting and construction management firm in Aurora, hired Katelyn to support its financial services group. Being a small firm of about 10 full-time administrative staff, the company has increased Katelyn's responsibilities—from managing payroll to handling bookkeeping. She appreciates the vote of confidence, saying, “I play a major role. It's crucial that I'm here.”

Katelyn enjoys the job immensely. It enables her to put her math skills to good use and is introducing her to the way business operates. More importantly, the experience has led Katelyn to discover her own professional interests.

“Last year I thought I wanted to be an accountant, but this apprenticeship has shown me that I want to deal with something that's bigger in scope,” she said. “I want to do something that affects the entire economy.”

# AN APPETITE FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Apprenticeship in a business setting has awakened in Katelyn a desire to understand the bigger picture and take a broad view on the interrelationships between business functions. She is fascinated by the way Sky Blue Builders' financial success affects staff and the community.

"I like being able to understand the business, what the problems are and how they can be fixed. You have to understand every hat people wear to make things run," she said. As an example, Katelyn described her function of examining spreadsheets. "I have to look objectively at the numbers, and subjectively at what that means to company success."



Katelyn now devours books and news reports about current events related to the economy. She wishes school did a better job of teaching young people to think critically. Instead, she says, "High school is filled with busy work—the work I do there isn't applied anywhere. This hurts people as adults. Apprenticeship teaches what the real world is like, and that my work means something and has consequence."

## "CRAZY GOOD EXPERIENCE"

Katelyn thrives on a busy schedule. She wakes at four a.m., works out, takes public transportation to work at Blue Sky Builders twice weekly and attends school three days per week. Evenings, she spends her time working with her stepfather and his colleagues to start up a cryptocurrency business. She is also considering writing a book about her interests.

Her busy-ness doesn't stop there.

Katelyn is firmly laying plans for her future. She wants to go into investment banking as a career. To get there, she will seek an internship opportunity at a large firm such as Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan Chase or Goldman Sachs before college graduation.

Apprenticeship plays a key role in solidifying Katelyn's vision for both her education and her career. "It seems far-fetched, but to have involvement in finance at such a young age through this apprenticeship is crazy-good experience."

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