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## **Williston Economic Development hires Gonzaga University Students for Summer Internships**



*Pictured are Rayce Vergets, WED summer intern; Sarah Dobler, WED summer intern; and Shawn Wenko, WED executive director. Williston Economic Development photo*

Williston Economic Development (WED) has hired two students from Gonzaga University (GU) for the summer. Sarah Dobler and Rayce Vergets joined the WED team on Tuesday, May 28.

Williston and GU are celebrating the seventh anniversary of the summer internship program. In all, 16 students are in Williston for summer internships. More than 90 students have participated in the program since its inception.

This is the fourth summer WED has been involved in the program.

"We are pleased to welcome Sarah and Rayce to our office and anxious to teach them about the inner workings of economic development through project work, mentoring and exposure to our daily activities," said Shawn Wenko, WED executive director.

Dobler is a native of Anchorage, AK while Rayce is from Newberg, OR. Both sought internships in Williston to learn about a new community.

"I applied for the internship program because I knew that it would give me a completely different perspective," said Dobler. "Alaska (her home state) has a complicated relationship with oil companies and growing up I was repeatedly told about how hard it was to keep the money from oil in the state."

Dobler, age 21, said her research showed Alaska and North Dakota have some different strategies when it comes to the energy industry.

"Williston has clearly worked very hard to continuously invest in its people, and it was that commitment to bettering the lives of its residents that drew me to this program," said Dobler.

Vergets, age 19, also sought a fresh experience in Williston.

“I had never heard of Williston, North Dakota nor had I been to the state,” he said. “The program was a perfect opportunity for me to step out of my comfort zone, but also to make an impact in a real place that goes beyond the scope of a university.”

The summer internship program is open to employers in northwestern North Dakota. Current employers include the Williston Downtowners Association, Links of North Dakota, Williston Vector Control, Williston State College, Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, American Engineering Testing, Strata, North Dakota State University Williston Research Extension Center and Williston Parks and Recreation District.