

## NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2023](#) / [September](#) / Africa Internship Changes Student's Med School FocusAFRICA INTERNSHIP CHANGES STUDENT'S MED SCHOOL  
FOCUS**'AFTER THAT, I CAN'T SEE THINGS THE SAME'**by [Kelli Caplan](#) | September 22, 2023*Read time: about 2 min*

Christina Richardson has known for years that she wants to be a doctor.

She has been focused on becoming a neurologist since seventh grade. The day she stepped onto campus, she started her journey toward accomplishing that mission.

But this summer, an internship opportunity changed her worldview and altered her plans. Richardson spent the month of July in Mombasa working as an intern at the second largest public hospital in Kenya with the organization International Medical Aid.

She was one of about 60 students selected from around the world to intern at the hospital.

"I loved it. Everything I learned spoke to me," said Richardson, '25 [Neuroscience](#) and [Leadership](#).

In Mombasa, she found her true calling. She has shifted her life goal from being a neurologist to becoming an obstetrician/gynecologist.

"It made me want to change my career path," she said. "It moved me."

Richardson's breakthrough moment came while working in the hospital's delivery room. She was stunned to learn women were given no pain medications and were not allowed to have visitors in the room. The hospital had only

the bare necessities. She watched mothers experience jubilation when their babies were born healthy — and grief when their babies didn't make it.

"After that, I can't see things the same," said Richardson, a Bonner Scholar. "It was mind blowing. I saw a lot I can't forget."

Richardson worked in many areas of the hospital, shadowing doctors and learning from them as they cared for ailing patients.

"It has definitely been an eye opener," she said. "I kept thinking, 'this is real life.'"

Richardson was not supposed to have been in Mombasa. Originally, she had planned to study abroad in Japan. But, when that program was canceled, she changed course. With the help of the Study Abroad Office, Richardson learned about the Mombasa opportunity.

**As a pre-med student, Richardson was entranced by the possibility of working in an African hospital in what would be her first time leaving the United States.**

She did rotations in the surgical, intensive care, and maternity units. She worked with a number of doctors and saw a plethora of procedures, including C-sections and a craniotomy. She loved watching the doctors at work, especially the OB/GYNs, and could picture herself doing what they were doing.

In addition to her work at the hospital, Richardson also traveled to a nearby high school to help teach the students about feminine hygiene. She enjoyed the educational aspect and the chance to enlighten young women.

"They asked a lot of questions they didn't know the answers to," she said. "They asked so many great questions. It made me realize I want to go into the field."

"I feel like I have made a great decision by switching my career path," she said.

Internships and Study Abroad are two of the four pillars of a Christopher Newport education. Those opportunities were huge positives that helped draw Richardson to CNU, along with being only one of a handful of schools in Virginia offering a degree in neuroscience.

"I love the academic nature of the school," she said. "I like the small class sizes and that people genuinely like being here. There is a close connection with faculty. This school cares about its students."

Richardson, part of the President's Leadership Program, has immersed herself in campus life, as president of her sorority, president of the Black Student Union, and as an admissions tour guide.

"I like everything I do," she said. "I love people and am a passionate person." Her drive for becoming a doctor shines through as she enthusiastically talks about Mombasa and her future.

Being a doctor, she said, combines all of her strengths in one career.

"It's the perfect combination of using the right and left side of my brain," she said. "It's technical, but it involves a lot of interpersonal relationships."

Richardson's plan is to take a gap year after graduation to study for the MCAT. From there, she wants to head to medical school. She is determined to make her mark on the medical world, maybe even around the world.

"I can see myself changing someone's life," she said.

## Christina in Kenya

