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PURDUE JOURNAL OF SERVICE-LEARNING AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Human Services Internship With Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network

Madison Duncan, College of Health and Human Sciences

Abstract

Madison Duncan is a Lafayette, Indiana native and senior in the College of Health and Human Sciences. In this snapshot, Madison describes an internship experience with the Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network (INRN) that helped prepare her for work with nonprofit agencies.

Introduction

I am from Lafayette, Indiana and a senior in human services, a major within the College of Health and Human Sciences at Purdue University. My major requires a capstone internship during our senior year, which is how my involvement with the Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network (INRN) began. The INRN contacted the Purdue professor for a course called Career Assessment and Development (HDF S454) about setting up an internship experience for Purdue students at a human services agency. Some options included the Cornerstone Autism Center, the Wabash Center, and the Department of Child Resources. I was put in touch with the INRN about a capacity building internship. I was interested in this particular option because of a class I took my junior year called Administration of Nonprofit Organizations (HDFS 348) in which I learned about areas of nonprofit agencies, such as strategic planning, operational planning, fundraising, and board governance. The INRN supervisor interviewed potential interns and chose two for the

spring 2016 semester—my peer, Kristina Lasker, and me. We were supervised by two people, a site supervisor and a university supervisor from the Human Services department at Purdue. The site supervisor runs a one-woman department and wants university-level interns with an interest in nonprofit work each semester.

Before starting this internship, I did not know anything about INRN. I learned that INRN is not a direct service organization for students; its clients are other organizations. Their mission is to “create dynamic learning experiences to help nonprofits achieve their missions” (Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network, 2014). Some of their services include creating workshops and webinars, consulting with organizations on strategic planning, board retreats, and in-depth training series. If you want to learn more about INRN or see a calendar of available workshops, you can find them at 1114 State Street, Lafayette, Indiana or at innr.org.

There are five different regions and directors for INRN, each serving multiple counties. I interned in the western region, which serves 24 different counties. INRN as a whole serves about 6,000 participants annually. The organizations served by INRN typically seek training on issues like board governance, fundraising, or leadership. They can request one-on-one consultations on creating a better strategic plan.

During my internship, I traveled all over the western region and beyond (from Lake County to Bloomington) to attend workshops, trainings, and meetings on multiple nonprofit topics such as board governance, fundraising, and the Harwood Institute for Public Innovators. Although the internship is unpaid, travel is reimbursed.

I created a training webinar on the topic of effective communication, and I developed a needs assessment interview that details an organization, so INRN can have a profile reference on the organization's strengths and weaknesses when working with them. I also worked closely with United Way of Greater Lafayette. We shared ideas and an office. My work at INRN helped my supervisor focus on individual organizations and spend less time facilitating workshops. We also converted existing curriculum into online resources—something that has been on the to-do list. Student service is always needed for INRN projects due to the ongoing influx of organizations, as well as the need to develop new workshops and training programs.

My personal challenge was feeling comfortable around executives and CEOs of organizations. I have grown in my confidence; I am now better equipped to answer questions about INRN's services and topics like board governance and strategic planning. For instance, Kristina

and I completed a needs assessment interview with Imagination Station without supervision. I gained experience developing interpersonal relationships, and I have better knowledge of nonprofit administration. I have developed many contacts in the Indiana nonprofit community, which will help me make connections in my future work. I have also expanded my training and facilitating skills through practice and observation. I learned a lot from this diverse experience, and I highly recommend this internship to any student interested in nonprofit work.

References

Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network. (n.d.). About. Retrieved August 8, 2016 from <http://www.inrn.org/about/about.htm>

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