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ENVS 191: Internship Practicum Reflection

This year long internship was challenging in terms of communication and creating engagement within the program. In the beginning of my internship with the Green Schools Alliance, I had a lot of freedom with how the program would be structured for our interns, which also meant that we had to get creative. In its initial stages we (the intern supervisors) got a feel for the writing skills of our interns. I started out by building off of our traditional intern program tasks where the interns would write four social media posts per month. This lasted until almost the end of the first semester. Although the intern's writing skills improved, over time I and my boss Scarlet could see that their work wasn't reaching the full audience on our social media. Although we talked to our interns about the style of their work and the topic choices they were going to write about, their posts were only meant for students, and didn't resonate with our older followers (which we could see through our posts activity). This made me more aware that image and how you portray yourself is important when it comes to social media writing because it can affect who your viewers are. After this, I wondered if they were even interested in this part of the internship at all. Therefore, I made the decision to focus the interns on another aspect of communications: multimedia.

Within this project, students had to make a film about a topic of their choosing that connects to sustainability or green schools. I think that the students were able to enjoy their work because they could connect it to aspects of their own life where they were speaking as themselves and not trying to frame themselves as speaking as the Green Schools Alliance in their social media posts. This helped students dedicate themselves more to the project. One of the biggest problems overall was getting the interns to finish their work on time. Although I designed a whole presentation around time management that I talked about during one of our intern calls, it really helped some more than others because ultimately prioritizing this internship over other aspects of our intern's days wasn't evident. I would constantly receive excuses about stuff like a sports event or a school vacation even though these were the types of assignments

that could have been planned around ahead of time. I tried my best to foster time management by making it as easy as possible for them to do it. I setup a unique week by week timeline for each intern about what they should complete each week to be able to finish the project, and I constantly reminded them of the milestone due dates of the project.

In the end, time management was still the biggest struggle that the interns said they had with the project, but they held themselves accountable and really showed that they learned something from this struggle. In the end, the interns said they loved the project because many had never done a film project before and they learned so many different skills such as interviewing, using a camera and editing in iMovie. I really appreciated this project because I was able to share my skills of interviewing, filming, him editing, project planning and time management, passing down my knowledge in a way that I thought was really interesting. As well, I learned that no matter how hard you try, sometimes you can't help someone and they have to learn on their own. This was especially evident because I couldn't be there with the interns. Communication was key, but a lot of the time all I could do was make sure that the interns felt like I was available to support them when they ran into trouble.

One aspect of this internship that I really liked was that there was a lot of flex ability with my hours and I could work from home. But with this flexibility, I struggled to meet my quota of hours per week. This struggle was beneficial in a way because I was able to write more blogs which I initially was worried I was not able to do because of my supervisor position. This also allowed me to dive into some of the concepts I initially wanted to learn more about. For example, I wanted to explore activism so I wrote a piece about the STOPHS2 Speed Rail movement in the UK. Looking at the skills that I have gained, I have learned that when communicating with others, a key factor to this is tailoring a message to fit the audience. No matter if that is on social media or if it is someone that I work with, I have had to make sure that the message that I send is clear to whom I am sending it to and can be received in the way that I intended to show desired outcomes.

I was really proud to be a mentor to these students. They are all in high school or applying for colleges and I wanted to make sure that they felt comfortable coming to me if they had questions relating to the internship or of they just wanted to talk about college or life in

general. I tried my best to have conversations with students throughout the program to see how they are doing and every month we had a call with everyone in the program. When I was a first year intern last year, I wanted to get ahead of the game coming into college and thought that the Green Schools Alliance would be a great way to do so. Although my writing skills improved, I didn't really try to reach out to either of the supervisors to talk about their experiences. I wanted to make sure that when I was a supervisor, people would feel comfortable talking with me. A part of this was really paying attention to each of the students when they talked about themselves and their work throughout the program so that they understood that we (the supervisors) cared about their work and helping them in their futures.

If I were to give others who are committing to internships advice I would say: Remembering what you can bring to the experience is a key tool to working in an internship environment. As my internship progressed, I had to get creative and utilize the skills I originally didn't think would be useful such as my film and interviewing background. Constantly asking questions about the experience you want and attempting to answer them time and time again throughout your internship can help to create a bank of experiences to look back and reflect on later. Within the communications field, it is important to know the values of the organization you are working for, because your work is supposed to reflect those values. Last, I would highly suggest talking to those within your field whether that be a boss, a coworker, or even the boss's boss. Asking others about what they like the most or least about their experience can help to see some of the flaws or benefits that weren't seen before, but can also help guide job decisions in the future.

Taking this experience with me, I really liked bringing a group of people together through our networking, but I am not entirely sure if I would like to have a similar internship in the near future. Although I had a positive internship, I don't want to work with high school students in my next experience. Even though I liked sharing my knowledge, and I learned how to be a better teacher because of the students, there is this whole other professional world that I haven't fully been a part of yet. As well, the target audience for the Green Schools Alliance is high school clubs, teacher and students, but I think that I would like to explore a difference audience to see how a goal or message must change to adapt to the audience.

As my internship progressed, I realized that the stability of funds had been shaky since the inauguration of our current president. This has affected how my boss works and can delegate her time within the internship program, which in effect, changes how the supervisors and other interns can work. Understanding this only makes the work of the Green Schools Alliance that much more important, but it is also harder to do so. As this year long internship progressed, I wondered how long I wanted to commit myself to this group after my internship was over. This instability was a part of that thought process. I have been a part of this group for three years and although it will be hard to leave, I see that progressing my experiences and trying new things now will help me to gain skills and better decide what type of business or group I would like to stand by more permanently where I can find stability, in the later future.