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COMM 495L, Summer Semester

Capstone Reflection

This semester has taught me that I can set goals and achieve them, even in the face of adversity. This was a condensed semester of only 7 weeks. I not only managed to complete my Capstone Course, but I maintained a 4.0 GPA in three other courses while working a remote, full-time job. I had the opportunity to work with Healers of Color Collaborative of Michigan; a nonprofit that is near to my heart, as I have family and friends who are members of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

I had multiple objectives which I needed to complete during the length of the project:

1. Gain better knowledge and understanding about HCCM as an organization: After meeting with Nedra Cannon (founder) and the other members of the board, I get the big picture. All these people have experienced stigmas, prejudices, and injustices making them the best board to create such an organization. Mental health is probably the most stigmatized affliction and HCCM hopes to decrease these stigmas through treatment and awareness.
2. Learn more about why the need for HCCM is so great in the community: There are so many people within the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities that suffer from mental health issues. What most people do not know is that these communities have higher stigmatic rates than people that do not identify with these communities. There are limited healthcare providers of color or that identify as LGBTQIA+, therefore limiting care for those who want and need a provider they feel they can relate to.

3. Advance my fundraising skills using social media and networking: This was probably the most difficult part of the project. My first plan was to design and organize a fundraising opportunity on Facebook where people could donate. Since HCCM was not on their vetted list of nonprofits, I could not do this. I did however use my networking skills to direct message people on my friends list to ask for donations via PayPal and Venmo.
4. Acquire working knowledge of mental health issues that will pertain to my psychology minor: In addition to my Capstone this semester, I was enrolled in Social Psychology, Dynamics of Personality, and Psychology Lab. These courses helped along the way in addition to supplemental knowledge I learned about through my work with HCCM.
5. Gain communication experience that will help me grow in my career: I gained communication experience through my vast and frequent email correspondence this semester with both HCCM and Barton Malow. Additionally, I had discussion posts throughout the course which kept me in contact with my fellow students.
6. Opportunities to work interdepartmentally with Barton Malow: I was able to partner HCCM with Barton Malow which was very exciting. This creates a way for donations to exist on a continuum, instead of just one time. I also wrote an article about HCCM for our “Nonprofit of the month”, which will hopefully inspire more donations. I will be organizing and implementing our community week involvement with HCCM to alleviate some of their workload via skills-based volunteering.

As I had mentioned earlier, the culture and message of Healers of Color Collaborative is something I am very passionate about. This pushed me to come up with new and inventive ways to help the organization grow while reaching my project goals. One thing that I am very good at

is following through and my work on this project was no exception. I completed everything I said I would, and I plan to deliver even after the semester has come to an end. I kept in communication with Chase Anderson (liaison) and Nedra Cannon (founder) throughout the semester to keep them updated; this was instrumental in my success as I received constant feedback from them. I was very pleased to have partnered HCCM with Barton Malow through my efforts; this relationship will create opportunities that will span over a potentially very long time.

Things that I feel would have made the Capstone experience better or more rewarding would be working with HCCM in person and a longer semester! I felt a bit pressured by the time constraints of this semester and feel that I could have made an even bigger impact if I had three months instead of less than two to reach my project goals. After the semester is over and my volunteer work with HCCM continues, I hope to work with them more in person and establish stronger relationships with the board members.

The communication program prepared me for the ASL project by giving me the tools I needed to be successful. My Interpersonal Communication course helped me with basic communication skills and conflict management. Voice and Articulation helped during Zoom meetings with rate, pitch, and phonation. Intercultural Communication helped to identify and remove biases and understand various cultural dimensions. Nonverbal Communication made me understand how important personal branding is and how the gestures, body language, and tone we use can impact our verbal messages. Organizational Communication showed me how important it is to understand how an organization is structured, and how different management styles can affect production, competency, and employee happiness. This course also taught me to think about my professional competitive advantage. Communication Ethics taught me the

appropriate ways to communicate in various situations and environments. Communication Theory taught me about the principles and theories of communication and how they apply to the way we communicate today.

I would like to say that the communication program helped prepare me for “life after college” or “the real world”, but the truth is I have been in the workforce and communicating in various arenas for many years. What the program has given me is a much more rounded and specific set of tools as I continue to grow and change in my career. I feel much more prepared going into meetings, assessing my worth as an employee, creating my personal brand, and working collaboratively. I am constantly learning about others and evolving as I meet more and more diverse groups of people. The communication program has nurtured this evolution and cultivated my desire to become a more effective listener and communicator.