

Summer Internship Program: Providing a holistic learning experience for equity students

Ms Jessica Leigh Luquin (jessica.luquin@unsw.edu.au), Ms Rita Kusevskis-Hayes, Ms Jessie Lui, Mr Jeffrey Meesterman, Dr Colin Clark
Student Life, University of New South Wales, Sydney

Aims

- To learn in a professional context and developed UNSW graduate capabilities as global citizens, scholars, leaders and professionals.
- To support the participation of students that come through an equity scheme in co-curricular activities
- To complement their degree and provide experiences unique the workplace context
- To allow students to further develop skills of interest

Introduction

First-year student support can be pivotal in influencing academic performance (Jacobi, 1991). Additionally, the term *Early Intervention* is internationally recognised (Fenske, 1997) and has been a popular phrase for describing support initiatives in education for low SES students since the early 1980s. Support initiatives should facilitate graduate attributes. McKenzie & Schweitzer (2001) recommend that support interventions should be aimed at improving academic achievement over social activities.

Definition

Students were required to be from a range of identified equity cohorts:

Registered with the disability service, came from an Aspire school, applied through the UNSW ACCESS scheme, participated in the U@UNSW program or attended a disadvantaged school.

Project Initiatives

Developing Resources for Self- Advocacy and Disability Disclosure

Interns were to conduct research and design a resource kit for students to advocate for and facilitate their needs in the context of their degree program, undertaking practicums/field work and accessing graduate employment opportunities. The project deliverables included 'When to Disclose' and 'What to Disclose' and understanding disclosure in relation to Disability Legislation. The aim is to deliver resources so that students with disabilities are able to make informed choices about disclosure, in a range of study and workplace environments and provide some of the language to facilitate disclosure.

Content Marketing for Co- Circular Experiences

The purpose of these internships is to create a small library of unique and inspiring testimonials showcasing individual student's journeys within a co-curricular activity. Student testimonials are a form of word-of-mouth marketing that feature strongly in the psychology of social proof. They can be very effective in persuading students to engage with particular co-curricular opportunities.

Re-Engage Community Partnership Project

Re-engage Student Life and Learning with current Leadership Program Community Partners as well as develop new Community Partnerships. • to build on and develop new content and resources for the Community Engagement component, for the benefit of students as well as current and potential Community Partners.

Student Welcome Initiative

Interns were equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to talk confidently about resources and information relevant to new equity students. This information will be given to the students once they have accepted their offers in the form of targeted phone calls, emails and online chat in semester 1, 2017.

Interns learnt about recording data, talking to students in a professional and friendly manner and confidentiality. Interns also participated in role plays. Interns gained an insight into call centres and have also developed resource content. The internship completed in December 2016 will complement the AHEGS program run in February 2017.

Student Marketing and Communication Research

This internship is to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to develop a communication strategy that can be shared confidently across departments. The interns will examine how equity students find information about universities as well as how they prefer to receive information. Interns will conduct research through various search engines and conduct surveys.



Resource bank

A range of resources were produced for use throughout 2017

Suite of digital media resources

Buzz feed type articles, short films used for capturing attention for use on university websites and newsletters. Students were surveyed on communication preferences.

Visual presentations on self advocacy and disability disclosure

Two students from the disability disclosure project went on to present their findings at a staff development day organised by the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND).

FAQ and knowledge base

Knowledge implemented into online chat feature to assist interns when chatting to new students. This provided a well rounded and quick response to new students.

Community partner engagement

Students identified organisations that are able to provide volunteering work in a community based setting off campus.

Feedback

"Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. The internship is honestly one of the highlights of my time at UNSW. It's the most the university has ever done to support me. I can't thank enough the people who organised it and gave the go ahead"

– 2016 Intern (Student Welcome Initiative)

"I would absolutely recommend an internship like this to other students as it was extremely rewarding" – 2016 Intern (Communications)

"Thank you for giving us this opportunity, I had an amazing time working, never thought I'd say that" – 2016 Intern (Self- Advocacy and Disability Disclosure)

Literature Cited

- Fenske, R. H. (1997). *Early Intervention Programs [microform] : Opening the Door to Higher Education / Robert H. Fenske, Christine A. Geranios and Jonathan E. Keller*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education.
- Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505-532. doi:doi:10.3102/00346543061004505
- McKenzie, K., & Schweitzer, R. (2001). Who Succeeds at University? Factors predicting academic performance in first year Australian university students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20(1).