

Human Resources students help meet nonprofit and small organizations' needs

November 13, 2012 * *The Reporter*

Students in the **master's degree program in human resources** offered through the Department of Human Services served as HR consultants to nonprofit organizations and one small business in North Carolina and South Carolina as part of their coursework this fall.

Under the supervision of **Marie-Line Germain**, assistant professor of human resources and leadership, and working with student Jamii Armstrong, who served as liaison between the students, professors and organizations, 10 teams of five to seven students each helped their clients address a specific human resources need.

Three teams worked with the nonprofit organization Liberty Corner Enterprises located in downtown Asheville. One team revised and updated the employee handbook. A second developed a new hire packet, on-boarding PowerPoint and new hire checklist. The third created a Family and Medical Leave Act policy. Tonya Andrews, finance director at Liberty Corner Enterprises, said the students were engulfed with a desire to make the final product applicable and useful to their agency. "They were a joy to work with," said Andrews.

Two other teams worked with Homeward Bound, which is also located downtown Asheville. One team developed an HR guidebook and appraisal forms. The other developed an evaluation tool and a training tool. Emily Ball, director of community engagement at Homeward Bound, said the students brought a level of expertise that was needed and have been an asset as Homeward Bound works toward professionalizing human resources tools and processes.

The sixth team revised, updated and consolidated the employee handbook for The Council on Aging of Buncombe County. Wendy Marsh, the nonprofit's executive director, said she was overwhelmingly satisfied with the team's work. "This work helped COA continue to meet identified strategic planning goals, allowing administration to focus on other work and bringing professional expertise to our processes at no cost," said Marsh.

The seventh team developed an employee appraisal process for Biggert's Hearing Instruments, a small business in Hendersonville. "I am very appreciative of the assistance Dr. Germain and her students have provided since we don't have an HR department. Their knowledge and experience are invaluable," said Deb Biggert, owner and audiologist.

Two more teams worked with Safe Harbor, a nonprofit located in Greenville, S.C. One team revised and updated the employee handbook and the other team developed a new employee orientation plan. Greta Young, assistant executive director at Safe Harbor, said she valued the professionalism and knowledge the teams brought to the project. "They exceeded my expectations and we are very excited to have an updated employee handbook and a new orientation program," said Young.

The 10th team developed a retention plan for nursing staff at the Hospice & Palliative Care Center in Winston-Salem. Charlotte Akers, human resource manager at HPCC, said the team's work was comprehensive and delivered in an extremely professional manner. "Our organization will definitely benefit from the project," said Akers.

The projects also were rewarding for students, who overwhelmingly reported they benefited from the experience, said Germain. Angela Wagner, an online student from Asheville, assisted with revising and updating the employee handbook for Liberty Corner Enterprises. Wagner described the experience as highly relevant to the degree she is seeking and the work she does as an HR Generalist.

"Not only are we gaining valuable research and writing experience, but also we have the opportunity to use our education and experience to benefit local organizations," said Wagner.

Additionally, Donald Moon, an online student from Boone who worked with Wagner on the same project, described the experience as a mutually beneficial venture and practical application for what they were learning. "Everybody wins," said Moon.

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