

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
Winter 2008

Internship Final Report

At the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, I had a variety of tasks relating to the Strategic Planning and Communications department. Three of my biggest projects were creating a press release database, updating the communications website, and doing a comparison project of the different external relations/public affairs departments of various higher education institutes.

My first task was to update the list of media contacts for the press release database. This was a large project, as many reporters had moved papers or assignments. I also had to create television, radio, journal, and stakeholder databases as well. This wasn't a particularly exciting topic, but it helped the system office a lot because many of the entries were outdated. My second large project was updating the website to include all the previous press releases, going back all the way to 2001. This project helped me learn the DNN website building software and become more familiar with it. My final project was researching the communications structure of several higher education institutions, such as UC, CSU, Stanford, USC, UCLA, and SDSU. This project was especially challenging, because each university is structured differently, and each department operates differently. Where one university might have a dedicated website team, another may have two or three part time people. However, I think I managed to get each system somewhat sorted out, and this project will hopefully help the community college system look for areas of improvement. In addition to these projects, I wrote articles for the newsletter and edited press releases as well.

Some of the more exciting experiences I had working for the Chancellor's Office were going to seminars or special conferences. It helped break up the monotony of sitting behind a desk for eight hours. I enjoyed going to a Crisis Communications seminar, where we discussed how to handle media inquiries and maintain the reputation of a business during a situation that could be potentially damaging to the company's reputation. I also enjoyed going to a lobbying day with the Governmental Relations department and speaking about my experience as a community college student. I think being a former community college student gave me insight that I was able to share with some legislative aides regarding what budget cuts could mean for the system.

I think I developed my professional skills during this internship. Though my office environment was very mellow, I interacted with a lot of people in a more professional setting, and worked on my interpersonal communication and networking skills. I found that especially in Sacramento, networking skills are essential, because so many people know each other and can introduce you to people who may be able to help with future career plans.

Prior to my internship I knew that I wanted to work in the field of higher education, and this help reassure that goal. However, I think I would prefer working at a specific campus site, rather than a system office. I like the atmosphere of universities, and the environment at the system office was more like a regular office building. However, through working the in Communications department, I found that I think I would enjoy in external relations or public affairs at a university. I enjoy working with people and the public on projects that benefit the university system. Before I started this

internship I wanted to work in Student Affairs, but I think External Relations would suit me well.

I would recommend this internship to a future Scholar Intern, especially one who was interested in higher education. I learned a lot about the system and the issues that affect higher education, and I made a lot of connections that will hopefully help me in the future. Specific to my internship, I think that it takes a person with initiative to succeed there because at times I had to ask for things to do. However, they always found a project for me, instead of giving me busy work. Everyone at the office was very friendly and helpful, and I learned a lot. Overall, I would recommend this internship to a future intern.