

As a part of my Social Work program at Western Carolina University, I was required to complete 448 hours of fieldwork with an agency of my choice. In the fall of 2017, I developed an internship opportunity with Under One Sky Village Foundation, a non-profit organization offering services to youth in foster care based in Asheville, NC. I had already established a relationship with the agency through securing a job with them a year earlier as a cabin counselor. During my time as an intern, I worked closely with my field instructor who served as the youth services director to complete a learning contract that fulfilled the nine competencies prescribed by the Council on Social Work Education.

Under One Sky Village Foundation consists of three programs: Junior Journey Camp for youth aged 7-11, Journey Camp for youth aged 11-17, and Second Wind for young adults aged 18-26. My primary work as an intern involved helping two young adults in the Second Wind program set goals for themselves as they transitioned into adulthood, specifically getting them into college. I scheduled meetings with them regularly to discuss their progress and provide resources for them to utilize once I no longer served as their mentor. Additionally, I assisted with grant writing, fundraising, policy research, speaking engagements, and program assessment and evaluation. Overall, the experience allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the foster care system as well as the impact it has on adolescents. From a logistic standpoint, I was constantly frustrated with the way the organization was operated. There were several meetings I would attend where no one showed up on time, I did not have set hours that I would report to an office every week like the rest of my classmates, which made it difficult for me to reach the required hours to fulfill my internship, and some events I was originally scheduled to attend were cancelled. Even though I had a rather unorthodox field experience compared to my peers, I believe that the obstacles I faced prepared me to be flexible, adaptable, and optimistic in the midst of adversity. My work with youth in foster care also set me on a mission to apply my

passion for this population into my work as a higher education professional in the realm of college access and success.

Considering high-impact practices (HIPs) as a whole, I believe that one of the greatest common characteristics among them is being able to share experiences with peers. Having a chance to discuss the progress of my work in my senior seminar with others who were also going through similar issues was crucial to my growth as a professional and as a scholar. I think that this is one of the main components of many of the other HIPs such as learning communities, capstone projects, first-year seminars and collaborative assignments. Additionally, I think that the aspect of giving back to the community in some way is common amongst HIPs. I'm sure that not every field of study is as intentional with this as mine was, but I do believe that many HIPs involve embarking on some sort of project that is intended to contribute to a particular population, a specific cause, or the profession at large. Overall, HIPs have played a significant role in my undergraduate career and add a level of real-world application that simply cannot be accomplished in the classroom.