

In STEP with students: Psych research assistants

by Audralynn See - Tuesday, February 08, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/8738/in-step-with-students-psychology-research-assistants/>

As part of the Student Titan Employment Program (STEP) at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Brianne Bartlett and Amanda Schroeder dive into what seems to be an endless tunnel of psychological history.

Name: Brianne Bartlett

Role: Research assistant

Department: Psychology

Major: Psychology

Year: Freshman

Hometown: Greendale, Wis.

Name: Amanda Schroeder

Role: Research assistant

Department: Psychology

Major: Psychology

Year: Junior

Hometown: Kaukauna, Wis.

What specific tasks do you do for your internship?

Bartlett: “My job was to clean and evaluate the psychology equipment found in the Psychology storage rooms. I had to look up what these ancient items were and organize them in a way so that people in the future can find them.”

Schroeder: “As a research assistant my job was to go through every piece of equipment the Psychology department has, organize it, decide if it was worth keeping and create a booklet containing all the equipment names and what it was or is used for. I also had to fix some of the broken equipment.”

How is the internship benefiting your education?

Bartlett: “It’s helping me to better understand the tools that psychologist have been using for a very long time.”

Schroeder: “Through the internship, I have acquired knowledge about much of the equipment used to conduct research in psychology, and I was given the opportunity to start a professional relationship with Dr. McFadden and other members of the Psychology department.”

How is the internship benefiting your future?

Bartlett: “In the future I will be able to use the people I have worked with as references as well as say that I have experience working with a team and also have improved my writing abilities.”

Schroeder: “The main benefit of my internship is the connections I am gaining. Dr. McFadden will be a useful resource in my education and she will be an excellent reference for future jobs.”

How is the internship benefiting your department?

Bartlett: “It’s getting all the equipment organized and that way people within the major can actually use it and know that it is available to them.”

Schroeder: “By organizing the mass amount of equipment the Psychology department has acquired through the years, it will be much easier for them to find what they are looking for. We also created a packet that has a picture of each piece of equipment, the name of it, and how it is used.”

What has been your favorite part of the internship?

Bartlett: “My favorite part of the job is really just getting the experience working with my major and getting to work with Dr. McFadden.”

Schroeder: “My favorite part of this position is the opportunity I have been given to get to know the members of the Psychology department, which will no doubt be a useful resource in my future.”

Have you faced any challenges? If so, detail how you overcame them.

Bartlett: “The entire project was a challenge because we came in knowing nothing about any of the items and had to research it all. We also had the job of figuring out what mattered and had value and what didn’t, which was pretty tricky.”

Schroeder: “I have faced many challenges during my internship. I was hired to fix some of the broken lab equipment, which has proven to be a difficult task. The equipment I fixed was quite old and difficult to get the parts needed to fix it. I also faced the challenge of deciding how to organize the equipment in a manner that would make it easy to find. Creating the booklet was a difficult task because some of the equipment is old and the only way to find out what it was used for was to do research, which was time consuming.”

Supervisor comments

“Brienne and Amanda are amazing,” said Susan McFadden, psychology professor. “They faced a huge, challenging—often dirty—task of sorting through the enormous collection of ‘stuff’ gathered in the psychology department over the last century. It looks like we’ve never thrown anything away. Some of the old equipment is quite valuable for it shows how psychological research once was conducted. Students today don’t understand how psychological research once was done because all they see are studies conducted through surveys or on computer screens.”

“Brienne and Amanda have done a lot of physical labor in addition to intellectual labor (e.g. going online to do research on this old equipment). Amanda has brought her tool kit to the lab and has repaired a number of items. Together, they have hauled an incredible number of cases of books to be donated to Goodwill. They have cleaned and sorted a miscellaneous assortment of items in an area we call ‘the tunnel.’ You’d really have to see it to understand and appreciate what they’ve done.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yReEEUj4IU>

The Student Titan Employment Program (STEP) offers students quality educational experiences while providing faculty and staff members with needed assistance in areas such as media services, student-faculty research, supplemental instruction, library assistance, instructional technology and academic computing support, and Web page development and maintenance. The program is funded through a one-time investment of \$500,000. More than 110 students are funded through STEP.

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