

Human resources graduate students help nonprofit organizations and small businesses

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Students in the WCU master's degree program in human resources served as consultants on 12 projects for five nonprofit organizations and small businesses in North Carolina and Tennessee during the 2014 fall semester.

The work was part of a course taught by Marie-Line Germain, assistant professor of human resources and leadership. Germain supervised the students' consulting projects, and graduate students Marie Maguire and Martha McCoy served as project coordinators.

Projects included developing an employee benefits program, a new hire and orientation package, a discipline policy and a new employee coaching program for the Asheville Humane Society; an employee handbook for Autism Tennessee in Knoxville; a new hire packet, job descriptions, a performance evaluation system and a disciplinary action procedure for Brother Wolf Animal Rescue in Asheville; a compensation concept and mechanics proposal and a performance management system for Carolina Day School in Asheville; and an employee handbook for the nonprofit HIGHTS community program in Cullowhee committed to serving at-risk youth.

Germain said the consulting work is about students cultivating skills and developing consulting relationships while helping nonprofit organizations and small business.

"We are all learning through the challenges these organizations face. The organizations learn about their own practices and how to improve them and we learn how to effectively solve real-life HR problems," said Germain.

Marcus Metcalf, HIGHTS program director, said the work WCU students offered that organization was "impeccable." "We would never have access to such a quality program if it were not for the efforts of this class and its leadership," said Metcalf.

Asheville's Carolina Day School also had a rewarding experience, said Robert McArthur, the school's chief financial officer. "Both teams that worked on our projects were professional and gave us a great product," said McArthur.

John Haas, chairman of the board of directors for the Asheville Humane Society, also said the work from WCU students was extremely valuable to the organization, which does not have a traditional human resource department.

Since 2011, graduate students in WCU's human resources program have provided pro bono consulting on 61 projects for 38 nonprofit organizations and small businesses in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee.

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