

Online master's in HR reaches 18,000 hours of pro bono HR consulting

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Inside WCU
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“Our growth has been exponential over the past 10 years. Part of our success is due to our students’ enthusiasm and high quality consulting work for our clients”, said Marie-Line Germain, professor of human resources and leadership and founder of HR Consulting Initiative.

This summer, clients included The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford in Asheville, Wellness Tours, The Wedge Brewing Company, Communities in Schools, Peacemakers of Rocky Mount, Foster Family Alliance, the Center for Domestic Peace, Communities Supporting Schools of Wayne County, Coastal Kia, Arts for Life, Triad Pride Performing Arts, A Link to Hope and the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Foundation in South Carolina. The HR projects included a compensation analysis, the creation of employee handbooks and updating job interview processes and the development of an executive succession plan.

Client Kevin Otis of The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford, an organization that provides a safe, nurturing home for children in need with opportunities to maximize their potential, worked with a couple of graduate students who updated their job interview questions, performance evaluations, employment application and their onboarding guide. "The recommendations, products, and working experience with the WCU HR Consulting Initiative students was tremendous. The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford requested support on various HR practices and forms. The result was much more than we asked. We appreciate the fresh look on our practices and all the support. MHCO gives the highest recommendation," Otis said.

Graduate student Kristal Genwright, who worked on a termination checklist, a corrective action form and an employee handbook revision said, “I looked forward to the HR consulting classes throughout the master's degree, with both anticipation and trepidation. I have found these were my favorite classes, by far, in the program. It was great to be able to work hands-on on a project and it was awesome to provide valuable work for a such a deserving organization.”

Fellow graduate student Brenna Riley served as the project manager for the consulting course, ensuring that the students had the resources they needed. “Serving as project manager was very rewarding. I was able to be there as a support system for the students and the professor as well as complete a small consulting project for a client. It was an experience that I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

The HR Consulting Initiative continues to partner with the Small Business and Technology Development Center to serve local Cullowhee and Asheville businesses. SBTDC is an extension of the business and technology services from the University of North Carolina that provides management counseling and educational services to small and midsize businesses in the area.

Since 2011, 869 MSHR students have worked on 407 pro bono consulting projects for 275 nonprofits, local government and small businesses in 18 states. For more information about the HR Consulting Initiative, contact Marie-Line Germain at mgermain@wcu.edu.