



No summer break for WCU's master in HR student consultants

WCU's Human Resources Consulting Initiative has once again made an important impact on our community, locally and out of state.



Inside WCU
Aug 7th, 2023

Housed in the Department of Human Services, Western Carolina University's Human Resources Consulting Initiative has once again made an important impact on our community, locally and out of state.

In the summer semester alone, more than a dozen graduate students in the Master of Science in Human Resources provided pro bono HR consultation services to organizations around the country, entirely online. The pro bono HR consulting was part the students' coursework in the online consulting courses taught by Marie-Line Germain, professor of human resources and leadership. Senior graduate students John Greeno, Rebekah Thompson and Makenzie McNeil served as project managers.

The 14 client organizations helped this summer were located in California, Illinois, Michigan and North Carolina, and in wide-ranging industries such as veteran empowerment (Eagle's Nest of St. Clair County), clothing and apparel (Headwaters Outfitters), girls empowerment (Girls On The Run), animal welfare (Piedmont Farm Animal Refuge), Hispanic outreach (El Pueblo), community outreach (HandsonNWNC), ending hunger (Inter-Faith Food Shuttle), public services (Listening Ear Crisis Center), safe spaces for at-risk teens (Lompoc Teen Center), veteran transitioning (Veterans Bridge Home), substance abuse prevention (Soundcheck Prevention Network) and community empowerment (Huntersville Presbyterian Church), among others.

Piedmont Farm Animal Refuge, in Pittsboro, has a mission to provide lifelong care to rescued farm animals, educate people about the realities of animal agriculture and promote veganism by offering knowledge, support and community. Founder Lenore Bradford asked that WCU help her organization with updating job descriptions, performing a compensation analysis and revamping the interview process.

"Our organization was paired with a student who provided pro-bono HR services through review of existing documents and additional research," Bradford said. "The entire process was straightforward, easy to engage with and resulted in excellent work that will improve the functioning of our organization in several ways. We are grateful for the existence of this program and hope to participate again."

El Pueblo, a Hispanic resource center in the NC Triangle area, needed to update its employee manual and policies. Florence Siman, director of programs [has] “been impressed and thankful for the support received.” She added, “Not only do we have a revised employee manual, but with your student’s support, we have included additional policies to address our current needs.”

Inter-faith Food Shuttle was assisted with the creation of a recruitment plan for its apprenticeship program. Lorenza Wilkins, chief officer of people and culture, said “Western Carolina University is home to one of the finest HR Consulting Initiatives in the nation. As a human resources executive with over two decades of experience in the private, public and social sectors - WCU’s ability to pair students with experiential and project-based learning opportunities provides unique advantages to host agencies and invaluable/practical field experience to students. Collectively, WCU and its host agencies are preparing the next generation of Human Resource professionals. We highly recommend collaborating with WCU.”

Since its inception in 2011, the HR Consulting Initiative has facilitated 549 consulting projects for 371 organizations in 22 states and abroad, involving more than 1,059 MSHR students – entirely online and at no cost to clients.

For more information, contact Germain at mgermain@wcu.edu or visit HRconsulting.wcu.edu.