Abstract

With the multitude of opportunities available to me at a university such as Ohio State, it is difficult to make a decision. However, overtly appealing is a Scholars sponsored May Session trip to the Nation’s capital. During this excursion, I will participate in behind the scenes tours of some of the most prestigious places. In addition to this, I will be engaging in a series of one-on-one professional informational interviews to learn about the different leadership roles in D.C. and how they work together to keep our great country going. Through these experiences, I will be participating in the STEP categories of leadership and internship.

Personal Statement

The process of decision making can be difficult: where to go to college, which career path is right, what can someone do with two thousand dollars. In my case, the career part was simple, forensic psychiatry, combining my interest in the mental health field with my interest in criminology. From there, the school fell into place. OSU has one of the best psychology programs in the US, extremely friendly people, so much spirit and pride, and it’s only a three hour drive from home. However, like all good things, there was a catch, a twenty-five thousand dollar a year catch, and being from a single parent household where the yearly income is less than that, I had to hope that my successes in high school were enough to earn an abundance of financial aid. Luckily, all of my leadership positions; editor of the school paper, secretary of National Honor Society, Key Club vice president, student council; and the fact that I was ranked fourth in my class led someone to believe I had achieved enough to be given a full ride to this great university.

This leads me to a conclusion which I will, perhaps naively, always believe to be true: if you put in the work, you will earn the reward. It’s a simple statement, but there are a myriad of ways to interpret it. Personally, I think that doing the work isn’t enough, you should also be passionate about it. For instance, my participation in the organizations that I listed above would be meaningless if my only motivation was to have something to write on a college application. In my opinion, working towards a goal is the best thing that a person can do; unless the steps you are taking have no other meaning than to get you to the goal. I wasn’t the editor of my high school newspaper so I would be a more competitive candidate for college admissions; it was because I enjoyed writing, editing, and researching the stories and keeping my fellow students involved with the goings on of our school. I’m passionate about helping others through food drives, blood drives, and community clean ups; it wasn’t simply the title of vice president of Key Club, it was everything that I did to earn that title. I believe that the process should be just as rewarding as the outcome, if it’s not, than maybe it’s not worth it. Life is not about going through the motions, it’s about experiences, and using those experiences to get to the places we want to go and to achieve our goals.

As previously eluded to, I am most enthusiastic about psychology and criminology. I have always been interested in the way the human mind works; why some people can kill
another person without remorse, yet there are those who can’t bring themselves to kill a spider. I find our excuses and motivations and histories fascinating. Thus, my goal does indeed reflect my passions: earn a degree to be able to practice as a forensic psychiatrist, perhaps one day working for the FBI. Here is where the two thousand dollar question is answered; what does someone do with two thousand dollars? Personally, I plan to join a few of my fellow Scholars this May to go to Washington D.C. This trip incorporates many facets of my interests, as well as a couple of the STEP categories. Not only will I gain a valuable internship opportunity, I will also be able to see and experience how leadership exists within our nation’s capitol. With these two tasks, the trip is a great leap towards my career goals, and also contains many aspects of my passions. Seeing firsthand the way that humans operate in the center of one of the world’s greatest nations can provide me invaluable insight into the human psyche. I am also looking forward to seeing how laws are made and what is considered when making decisions that affect millions of people. Above all, experiencing the city life and being on my own in a different environment will challenge me, and shape me into a more well rounded individual; which is what, I think, the full college experience should be all about.

Project Description

A rather important skill to have experience with is leadership, which is my chosen STEP route. Currently, as a prerequisite to the Washington D.C. trip, I am in a seminar class that meets once a week, focusing on the qualities and characteristics of leaders. We discuss the multitude and variety of leadership roles available in DC and how those dynamics have operated in the past, how they are currently operating, and how they will most likely operate in the future. Throughout the semester, we are working on a reflection paper on what leadership means to us, how we see leadership everyday, and what we can do to become better leaders. The seminar class also hosts guest speakers that give presentations on resume building, conducting yourself in an interview, dressing for success, and other skill building techniques. Along with this, we have discussed the different agencies in DC, there was a review of political terms and positions, and a conversation about our impressions of DC. We are also covering some of the history and architecture that makes our nation’s capital such an extraordinary place. All of these lessons will culminate with the two week excursion in DC.

This spring semester seminar and the May Session trip to DC were offered through the scholars program here at Ohio State. Second year Scholars students were encouraged to apply to the program last semester, autumn 2013, and it is taking place spring semester and May Session 2014. The combination of the seminar and the two weeks in Washington is worth two credit hours, thus even giving us course credit for this educational leadership experience. Kevin Freeman, the program manager for the Politics, Society, and Law Scholars, is the faculty member leading the seminar and will be escorting the twenty second year Scholars students on the trip. There are also two other faculty chaperones that work in the college of arts and sciences. We will be leaving from campus on Sunday May 4th and returning on Saturday May 17th.

The DC excursion consists of two separate parts. The first week will be spent together as a group participating in tours, visits, and talks, some of which are usually not open to the public. We will be seeing the FBI training academy, the Pentagon, the Washington Post, National Public
Radio, the Supreme Court, the State Department, as well as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Georgetown Law School. We also have some team building type activities planned such as group dinners, as well as group outings to DC landmarks, and seeing a Washington Nationals baseball game. This will provide a good balance of intellectual activities as well as some fun relaxing experiences. This portion of the trip will enhance our knowledge of the inner-workings of DC and allow us to experience first hand the different forms of leadership roles and opportunities there are.

The second week of the trip is based off of a professional itinerary that we make during the seminar class. Each student is responsible for contacting, on their own via phone or email, a minimum of five to seven individuals with whom to schedule an informational interview. I am hoping to make contact with a few people from the FBI, perhaps some lobbying firms or members of think tanks, specifically those working on educational policy. I am also looking into if anyone from a health related field would be available to meet. I plan on having a good mix of interviews with people in careers that may have some similarities to my goals, and interviews with people whom I simply find interesting, or I find their job intriguing. The informational interviews are set up not only to expand our knowledge, but also to challenge ourselves. During this week, we are on our own to navigate DC and to get to the appointments on time. Being in a new place and having the freedom and responsibility of that freedom is going to be challenge, and will test our abilities to lead and motivate ourselves.

During the trip, we will be staying at a hotel in Pentagon City/Arlington in double rooms. Our daily starting times will vary, ranging from 7:30 am to 9:00 am the first week, and the second week will vary depending on our individual interview schedules. Daily ending times will also vary both weeks. While the schedule of the first week will be semi-structured, the second week gives us more freedom and variability. Weekends are open for free time and exploring the city, and I will personally be taking the opportunity to see museums and visit other places that we may not have time for as a large group.

There will be many opportunities throughout the trip to explore and experience DC in whatever way you wish, and I plan on taking full advantage of that. I am hoping to visit as many agencies, institutions, museums, galleries, and monuments as I possibly can. I have never been to our nation’s capitol before, and I am eager to delve into a little bit of everything that is available there. However, it is also a May Session trip that counts for credit hours, so there are myriad requirements and mandatory activities, all which will enhance our understanding of leadership and its connection to Washington D.C.

**Budget**

In regards to the budget, the trip itself costs $1550. The remaining $450 will be used for food, and any extra expenses I might incur. If I go over $450, it should not be by much and the money would come from my own personal bank account.

The program cost of $1550 includes:
• the travel to and from Washington DC
• thirteen nights in the hotel, breakfast is included
• an unlimited metro pass
• a group dinner
• any costs that are associated with the mandatory group activities.

The remaining $450 would go towards
• Additional meals, (lunch, dinner)
• Groceries (the hotel has a kitchen)
• Individual museum visits
• Any other costs

STEP Leadership Supplemental Document

Please answer the following questions regarding your intended project:

1. Please describe the planned leadership development to be performed in this project.

   During the seminar portion of my Washington DC leadership trip, we are focusing on the qualities and characteristics of leaders. We discuss the multitude and variety of leadership roles available in DC and how those dynamics have operated in the past, how they are currently operating, and how they will most likely operate in the future. Throughout the semester, we are working on a reflection paper on what leadership means to us, how we see leadership everyday,
and what we can do to become better leaders. The seminar class also hosts guest speakers that give presentations on resume building, conducting yourself in an interview, dressing for success, and other skill building techniques. During the actual trip, we will be meeting with professionals in our field of interest and networking, therefore taking the initiative to further our future opportunities.

2. Please describe what you believe to be three qualities most necessary for effective leadership. Describe how your plan to pursue leadership development will help you learn or refine those qualities.

Three qualities that are necessary for effective leadership are; communication skills, organizational skills, and the ability to work in a group. First of all, if you cannot clearly communicate your ideas and motives, then you will not be beneficial to a leadership role. Secondly, if you cannot keep track of your ideas, plans, or others’ suggestions, then your leadership will not be effective. Also, if you cannot be flexible enough to both lead on your own and help others, then you are not a good leader. The trip to DC allows me to practice communicating through group visits and informational interviews, which I will have questions prepared and such. I am also in charge of making my own professional itinerary, contacting individuals and scheduling meetings, which will benefit my organizational skills. A portion of the trip will consist of group activities, during which we will be working together in various forms.

3. How do you plan to reflect on and make connections between concepts and skills you have learned in an academic setting and your involvement in leadership development programs

Academic settings have definitely taught me to be organized and communicate well. I have even had experience working in a group in an academic settings. These concepts and skills will be essential during my involvement in the leadership program. A good amount of the courses I have taken are great prerequisites for the experiences that I will encounter on my travels. The series of professional interviews I will be conducting will have a similar feel to discussions with a professor during office hours, except much more formal of course. Essentially, the Washington DC leadership experience will have many facets that are similar to my academic life at The Ohio State University; with more professional, challenging and expansive aspects.

4. Please describe how you plan to evaluate your growth as a leader and ability to apply this learning in future contexts.

During the seminar portion of my STEP experience, we have to write a reflection paper on what leadership means to us, and how we use it in daily life. In order to evaluate my growth, I plan on writing another reflection paper after my time in DC, and seeing how the two compare, before and after firsthand experience with leadership in the nation’s capital. I will take the knowledge I acquire and apply it to my future positions as both a member of the leadership council of the Humanities Scholars and as a peer career advisor for the College of Arts and
Sciences. Two positions which require communication, organization, and many other aspects of leadership that I will stumble upon throughout my excursion in Washington.

Michelle Brunson 3/30/14
Signature of STEP Student Date