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SERVE Midterm Reflection Paper

It has been two months since I joined the PATH team and I have learned a lot about both myself and the organization. Being a part of the PATH team is eye-opening; I now understand so much more about the non-profit world and the amount of time and commitment it takes to make an organization like this thrive.

For my internship, I am a part of the human resources team. I work with six other individuals on a project that includes creating internships for other PATH offices around the world. Right now, I am creating the internship process for Tanzania. This entails many different aspects of human resources and communication. First and foremost, I am in close contact with the head of Human Resources in Tanzania, Esther Ndivo. I have 6:30am Skype calls with her every Wednesday in order to keep her updated on the progress of my project. The phone calls last for at least an hour each week. I have actually become rather close with Esther; we take time to talk about our weeks and how we are doing personally because I have found that having an actual relationship allows for better communication. She is a brilliant woman who is both passionate and professional; she is teaching me so much.

The purpose of my project is relatively simple; I have to implement an intern application process for Tanzania. In order to do this, I had to fully understand the United States internship process and all the paper work that goes behind it. I have taken all the major documents, such as internship agreements, requisition forms, templates, etc., and edited them so that they coincide with Tanzania. In order for that to work, I had to research local labor laws for Tanzania and be well educated with the historical background of the country when it comes to internship
policy. I came to the conclusion, through conversations with Esther and personal research, that there had not been a consistent internship policy in Tanzania; meaning that I would be working from the ground up. This has allowed for a fairly open timetable in order to accommodate all the changes we have made to the United States process. I have finished editing most of the documents and I am presenting my entire project at the end of May to the entire Human Resources team.

Because of this, the internship has turned into something I did not expect. In order to fully explain this, allow me to use the metaphor of a building. Many students enter into an internship like an already built building. They can just walk into it and know the employees and what they are selling and admire the beauty of the skyscraper. However, I entered into this internship during the construction process. Although it is more work, I have had the privilege of being a part of the building process. My internship is beyond the surface; I get to contribute to the framing, painting, electrical, etc. I am making an impact at PATH that goes beyond their Seattle offices, which is something really exciting.

Through this experience, I have learned that a non-profit work environment is both rewarding and frustrating. At many points, my supervisor wants us to take control of situations. Meaning, she has a more hands-off approach. This is wonderful because I learn so much, however I realize I work better with a little more structure involved. This is also difficult to accomplish at a non-profit that is continuing to grow and change; even during the course of my internship, we have had to change multiple aspects of the internship process. By forcing myself to be flexible, I am now more capable in many different situations. I understand that the work ethic I have will differ from my fellow interns. I understand that my supervisor being more
hands-off is a technique that fully engages me in PATH. I understand that being a part of the building process of a Global non-profit that is located in more than 70 countries is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The first half of my internship has been nothing but rewarding. Although it can be frustrating and overwhelming at times, I beyond thankful for this learning opportunity and the experience of assisting a global non-profit.

Final Reflection

As a graduating senior at SPU, it has been interesting approaching this year in a significantly different way. The question of “what do you want to be when you grow up” has more depth, more importance. As graduation rounds the corner, I find myself in a restful state of peace because I have learned that the question is not “what” do I want to be but rather “who” do I want to be.

My experience at PATH has proven to be one of the most influential times I have had at SPU. Influential by allowing me to learn about myself and the differences between my calling and my career. One of my favorite things about the internship was the freedom that coincided with it. I had the opportunity to have an internship that allowed me to make an actual global impact, something that went beyond coffee and papers. Having that freedom allowed me to make my own decisions when working on a project; even though I still had to get all my ideas approved through HR, I was still able to make decisions. With that being said, the freedom was also one of my least favorite things about the internship. The freedom, while being open and exciting, was also frustrating at some points. There were times when I was supposed to make a decision or have something done and instead of feeling empowered I felt overwhelmed because
of the lack of information I had in order to make this decision. After some significant time at PATH I felt much more capable of making those decisions. However because of the fluidity that a non-profit brings, there is a lot of room for structure change that put pressure on the freedom to make my own choices. Yet, through the ups and downs, my internship gave me the opportunity to learn more about the process that coincides with the behind-the-scenes of non-profits. My internship gave me insight into the work of creating support for program teams and gave me a new appreciation for everything human resources does for a company.

Reflecting upon the work I have accomplished this quarter, I can see the impact that my internship has had on a global scale. I effectively created an internship process for the PATH offices in Tanzania, so much so that country leaders of PATH in South Africa and Uganda want the programs as well. I was able to foster a relationship with Esther, the woman in charge of HR in Tanzania; so much so that I would consider her a mentor now verses a boss. My boss Michelle has told us multiple times that the internship process we as a team are creating is going to change the trajectory of internships at PATH; I fully agree and believe that. The work that myself and the other interns have put into this project is immense and game changing; there will be a new way PATH runs their internship program and I got to be a part of that.

When looking specifically at my career, I can honestly say I have a new set of professional strengths after leaving this internship. On a very surface level, I can now master Microsoft Office to another level. I have had to write multiple professional e-mails to members in and out of PATH, allowing me to continue to develop a professional and approachable tone over technology. In addition, I now have the professional skill to plan meetings that cross time zones. Within the United States, I have had to plan events where interns and leaders from Washington DC and interns and leaders at PATH Seattle could both be a room (in person or over
Skype) at the same time. Outside the United States, I have had to plan meetings where both myself and Esther in Kenya can both be available. I am also able to speak my mind in a professional setting. My intern advisor, Michelle, has expressed how much she appreciates my willingness to be bold and has trained and tuned me in a way that both allows me to speak out but also be professional. However, as a bold woman in the workplace, I am still trying to find that balance of professionalism and passion, especially in an organization that I believe in so strongly.

Sitters discusses how “Careers far too often emphasize competition over cooperation, wealth over generosity, power over service, and ideology over truth. They can become self-serving.” My calling of loving people on a global level can be used to override these ideas of competition and wealth. I can use my calling by focusing on the bigger impact verse the success of individuals. By taking the focus off of myself and putting others first, I can love people both in the office and around the globe. In addition, being intentional with those I work with is another way I can use my calling within my career. Loving people means taking time to know and appreciate those around you. By being intentional with those around me, I can get to know people on a deeper level and therefore love others on a global level. I have already started doing this by being intentional with Esther by being genuinely curious about her life beyond the workplace.

As I reflect back over the past few months at my internship, I find myself focusing more on my calling as an individual in the workplace rather than my career as an individual. Jerry Sitter defines calling as “as a God-given purpose to use one's time, energy, and abilities to serve God in the world.” PATH is not a Christian organization; there is nothing that has to do with faith in its mission or vision statement. However, even though there is no religion that coincides
with PATH, my mission and purpose as Christian does not change. I am called to love people on a global level; that is my calling. My passion is global health, which means I find myself in an internship at an organization that both allow me to follow my passion and pursue my calling. Because of this, I want to be employed with this organization that allows me to follow all aspects of a professional career. Jerry Sittser captures all my emotions in one single quote, “Though we have to discover our calling, we should also recognize that it is already in us, very much a part of our identity, waiting to be discovered and expressed, like perennial seeds that, once planted, produce flowers that come up year after year.” My calling is something that is beautifully unique to myself and given to me by a creator that has loved me before the world was even made. I find nothing but joy in continuing to discover how my calling can further shape my career by fully trusting the path that Jesus has for me.