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Eli J. Segal Citizen Leader Program

Brandeis Segal Fellows Summer Internship Report

When you arrived at your Internship site, did you know what you needed to know? Did you have the name and contact information of your site supervisor?

Yes. I had spoken to my site supervisor over the phone and emailed her a few times to work out the details. On the first day of my internship, I was given a tour and orientation.

What did you learn that you wish you had known before you started?

I wish I knew a little more about the relationship between the national office of College Summit and its actual sites around the country. Being very accustomed to working directly with the people, I was not clear on what my role would be at the College Summit National Office—whether I would have the opportunity to work directly with the high school students or not, and how my work at the National Office affects the high school students, either directly or indirectly.

It also took me a little while to find the actual office on my first day, I wish I had directions.

What did you learn about leadership, followership, human relations, teamwork, civic engagement? About yourself? About making change? (This is the most important question—please tell us what you learned from every perspective.)

I worked with the marketing team at College Summit, which of course, introduced me to teamwork in the non-profit world. Within the marketing team, we each had our own assignments, but collaborated when there was some project or issue that needed a little more attention. For example, College Summit was going through a new branding project, and each of us voiced our opinions of the not-so-great brands that the firm we hired had given us. We then worked together to resolve the problem by offering the firm some of our own suggestions, and letting them expand upon them.

I noticed that each of the members on the marketing team had a very good relationship with our supervisor, Georgia. She would oversee the activities of the team from a distance, giving us space to be creative and trust our own judgment. I thought this worked very well for our team; it made me feel very comfortable with contributing my own ideas, and also approaching Georgia if I ever needed advice or help. Due to this open and encouraging atmosphere, I also felt welcomed to connect the work I was doing in DC for the Global Peace Festival, to my work in the office, by initiating a "Million Acts of Service and Kindness" program with my coworkers. I gained a lot throughout the process, learning about what steps I needed to take in order to cater such a program to College Summit.

I noticed that at College Summit, people were very passionate about what they do. They appreciate each other very much for the hard work that they contribute and respect each other's ideas. Also, nothing at College Summit seemed to be completely set in stone, except maybe its overall goals. Therefore, suggestions for improvement were always encouraged, and taken seriously, which I thought was wonderful.

My work at College Summit allowed me to challenge some of my weaknesses as a leader, including public speaking. I also learned that, although I thought it was a great experience to be working at a national office (as opposed to working out in the field) I do not think I am ready to make that transition, yet. Additionally, working with the marketing team helped unleash my creative spirit, which I realized had been hidden beneath my busy schedules throughout high school and college.

I learned a great deal about starting a non-profit organization and I learned that at these organizations, people are always ready to take initiative, and do not necessarily wait around for direction. This summer opened my eyes to my own potential as a leader at Brandeis. Learning about the way this particular organization functions, and speaking to very experienced people in this line of work allowed me to put the work I do at Brandeis into perspective, and

understand how transferrable the skills I am picking up at this school are to the real world. Meeting with leaders within the organization also helped me understand that if I wanted to establish my own NGO, I could, I just need to focus on a specific issue and run with it.

What program improvements would you recommend? Pay? Program? Site selection? Anything at all? (This is also very important. Given that the program is new—you all were the first ones to go through it—I would be very surprised if the list of improvements needed was short.)

I thought my overall experience was pretty good, so I do not have so many suggestions. I was given meaningful projects to work on, but there were times when I had typical intern tasks. While I did not mind doing that work because I was eager to help in any way I could (not to mention the challenge of employers finding meaningful work for their temporary workers) maybe this could be improved upon.

I would have liked to meet with my coach more often. However, both Melissa and I were fairly busy, so it is understandable that we did not meet every week. Also, over the summer, I was confused about the difference between coaches and mentors, as well as the role of the "network". I think clearly defining how each of those things contribute to our overall experience would be helpful.

What did you accomplish at the internship site this summer? (This is important both if you accomplished great things and if you didn't—the question in both cases is "Why?")

While at College Summit, I worked on a number of projects, including organizing editorial calendars, evaluating sessions at the 4-day workshops for the high school students, and creating the Peer Ahead! newsletter, which will be distributed to the students. In addition, I was able to connect work that I was doing in DC for the Global Peace festival to my work at college summit by catering a program for "A Million Acts of Service and Kindness" to our DC office.

While working on these projects, I was introduced to the way non-profit organizations operate—how each department at the National Headquarters plays a very specific role that contributes to the organization on a nation-wide level. I was very satisfied with the variety of tasks I was given because it allowed me to meet people in different departments and learn about not only what they do, but learn about their unique perspectives on why they decided to work with low-income high school students.

What else would you like to mention that is not captured in the questions provided above?

So far, the most meaningful part about this experience has actually been learning about Eli Segal and the reasons for creating this program. I am very inspired by the stories that I have heard about Eli Segal, about how he always put his family first, and how he dedicated his life to something much greater than himself. I think service is a very powerful thing, and that it is an equalizer in that it has the ability to both empower people and humble people. I think it is through living for the sake of other people that we can move the hearts of others and change this world for the better. I admire Eli Segal for how much he valued serving others, and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to work with Mora Segal, and get to know the family on a more personal level.