

Thursday, September 12, 2019

Since my internship has concluded and I am submitting these reflections post hoc I find myself able to answer the prompt, “why did you select this internship,” with added clarity. Frankly, prior to January 6, 2019 I did not intend on completing a summer internship. It was on January 6 that I laid out an insolvent summer budget, based on a three-month gap in income, and in a reaction to that budget, on January 7 I paid for access to the ACUHO-I internship portal. That story seems simple enough, but of course that is not the whole story. If it was just about income, I could have applied for a job a block from my apartment at Starbucks (to which I have previous experience), instead I looked to Residential Life (to which I have no previous experience).

As I look critically into that choice, I recall a moment when a student affairs friend shared their belief in the importance of a rounded resume. I imagine today, as much as I did then, that such “roundness” has the ability to increase lateral professional mobility. And to contextualize January 7 using that understanding, it was well within my projected future that I could have a lateral professional shift. In an intern report written in August, I made the point clear: “...I wanted to explore Residential Life as a functional unit, experience an Ivy League institution, and earn a sustainable wage over the summer months.”

The yet unmentioned point, my desire to experience an Ivy League institution, was very similarly motivated for “roundness.” With an undergraduate degree from a mid-sized regional public university, and in the midst of graduate studies at a large-sized public research university, my experiences with highly selective private institutions, like the Ivy League, were limited. Perhaps, that begins to answer the question, “why did you select this internship.” But there are 8 Ivy League institutions, so why Cornell, and why as a Summer College Resident Director? Humorously, and simply, because they asked me.

Shortly after paying for access to the ACUHO-I portal, I set to reading the 380 position summaries and as I did so, I assigned each one a 1-10 rating. According to that initial record, I rated Cornell’s Summer College Resident Director position a 4. I plainly felt unqualified. A week or so passed – the priority application deadline had passed – and I got an intra-portal message from the Assistant Director of Summer College, asking me to apply. It seemed like a long shot, but it seemed genuine, and it came with an added benefit, she had also reached out to Dylan (my fiancé). Well, the interviews followed, and in some sense the rest is history.

While time has given me clarity about my motivations for selecting this internship, it has yet to shed its light on the deeper expectations I held as I moved to Ithaca, New York. And to some extent, I am not surprised by that. I am able to acknowledge I accepted the internship aware of my ignorance related to residential life. How could I, ignorant of the functional area, have expectations for it? I only knew that if I gave it my honest effort and kept my mind open, I would be sure to learn something. And that I did.