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Minnesota N.O.W.

Final Impact Report Summer 2017

This past summer 2017, thanks to the Badger Reach program, I worked as an intern with the Minnesota division of the feminist organization N.O.W. (National Organization for Women). My official title with Minnesota N.O.W. was an “Action Intern”, as I worked closely with the Action Committee of Minnesota N.O.W. In this position, I had various tasks throughout the summer. Some of these tasks included planning and organizing various events. These events included the Minnesota N.O.W. Meet-Up, various committee meetings, and I also helped begin planning for the Minnesota N.O.W. state conference the spring 2018.

The ongoing project I worked on during my internship, was putting together what we called the ‘Capital Players’ document. This excel spread sheet is a comprehensive list of the Minnesota Representatives and their views. I collected biographical information of the Representatives including but not limited to, their education, birth place, committees they serve on, and their contact information. In addition, we created a rating system to rank the Representatives based on their alignment to the Minnesota N.O.W. legislative platform. In order to rate the representatives, I perused the various bills they authored or co-authored, and looked at how these bills aligned with Minnesota N.O.W. values. Through this process, I became quite familiar with the Minnesota N.O.W. legislative platform. I also re-wrote, and added a few points to clarify and update the platform. I then proposed these changes to my supervisor. They have yet to be approved by the board.
My favorite part of working with this feminist organization was being able to meet other activists in the Twin Cities, and learn about the various projects they are working on. Seeing their commitment to make a change by donating their time, energy, and skills was quite inspirational. I attended various committee, and board meetings to see first-hand how the organization operates between the various committees. One such example of a committee I worked with was the LGBTQ+ committee. At the Minnesota Pride festival, we collected signatures for a petition to propose a bill in the house to place a ban on “Gay to Straight” conversion therapy. After collecting the signatures, we went through them to hand count how many signatures we collected. The LGBTQ+ committee intends to use these signatures to encourage the introduction of such a bill in the next legislative session.

Although I never had any specific ‘aha’ moments, I did learn how many of the Badger Reach Program themes correspond to real life work with non-profits. Working with the Minnesota division of a larger national organization, I came to understand how the state in which I lived impacted the types of projects we worked on, and how we went about accomplishing our goals. Being able to narrow down campaigns to the state level made them feel much more manageable and specific. Furthermore, I learned how relationships can greatly impact the success of campaigns. Some of the people in the LGBTQ+ committee had been involved with activism, Minnesota NOW, and other progressive organizations in the Twin Cities for several years. This experience, and the relationships they had developed over the course of their activism, allowed them to have contact with people of varying perspectives, and skill sets.

Through my internship with Minnesota N.O.W., I connected with, and volunteered at the political arm of Planned Parenthood, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Minnesota
N.O.W. and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund often collaborate as they have similar goals. I attended an Activist Training Workshop, and volunteered at two phone banks at the clinic. At the Activist Training Workshop, I learned more about Planned Parenthood, the current climate in the political arena when it comes to reproductive rights, and how to be an effective activist. We also discussed how best to approach phone banking. At the phone banks, we called individuals who had at one point in their life had some contact with Planned Parenthood Action Fund. The nature of the phone calls varied depending on the campaign the Action Fund was working on, but they usually centered on imploring the individual to call their representative to urge them to create or support legislation which coincided with Planned Parenthood values.

Meeting other activists who worked with the Planned Parenthood Action Fund was an invaluable experience. Through my internship, I learned not only what Minnesota N.O.W. activists are working on, but also various projects in process for the reproductive rights of women. Many of the individuals I met working with both organizations were involved with, and volunteered for several progressive organizations across the Twin Cities. It was cool to see this kind of collaboration across organizations.

Through my internship experience, I learned various lessons that would not have been possible otherwise. The most important lessons I learned were regarding setting specific and realistic goals for myself. Minnesota N.O.W. does not have a physical office, so much of the work I did, I accomplished on my own time from my computer. I did have weekly meetings with my supervisor to discuss progress, be assigned new tasks, or clarify instructions. This being said however, I had to be self-motivated and disciplined, as I did not have a set work schedule. I found the easiest way for me to have this type of self-discipline was to set weekly goals for
myself. Making sure my goals were realistic and specific allowed me to stay on track with my projects, and gave me a sense of accomplishment.

My biggest piece of advice for future students thinking of volunteering with Minnesota N.O.W. is to accept bureaucracy. Especially at the beginning of my internship experience, I was not used to the seemingly slow pace in which non-profits operate. Much of this perceived slowness, has to do with the bureaucracy present at various levels of the organization. In addition, I would stress the importance of one’s work even if at times it may feel unimportant. For example, scheduling committee meetings may not be very exciting, and it won’t change the world, but these small organizational and clerical tasks are what a successful non-profit organization are built on.