**Emma Miller – Program Reflection**

I spent my Badger Reach Fellowship working at The Advocates for Human Rights, a non-profit organization that has been working towards protecting and ensuring human rights around the world since its establishment in 1983. The Advocates works out of its office in downtown Minneapolis, where they host trainings and workshops and advocate for clients who are detainees, refugees, and asylum seekers in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. The Advocates also works on human rights issues across the country and has an international influence, holding consultative status with the United Nations, leading human rights trainings around the world, and working with international partner organizations to uphold human rights.

During my internship, I primarily worked on restructuring the organization's volunteer processes. This project began with the spring intern, and I took over it for the duration of my internship. The Advocates has a big international reach but operates out of one office with a small staff of about 20 or so, and so it heavily relies on its volunteers. Every program uses volunteers, ranging from volunteers who manage the front desk, to professional photographers who photograph events, to volunteer attorneys who work with The Advocates' clients on their cases, sometimes spending several years on one case. The volunteers that work with The Advocates have a wide variety of skills, ages, time commitment, interests, and professions, and the skills that they can contribute to the organization are not always being recognized or utilized fully due to not having a cohesive, functioning system to keep track of past, current, and prospective volunteers.

During my internship, I gathered information on how the volunteers are currently recruited and managed for each program through meetings with the head of each program. For the rest of my internship, I worked with my supervisors at The Advocates as well as two outside volunteers mapping out the best way to move forward to get to the end goal of having a cohesive database that holds the volunteer information for the entire organization, and can cross reference volunteers who are also board members, donors, etc.

In addition to this main project, I also worked on many smaller tasks for the organization, including redacting sensitive information from documents, creating trainings for incoming volunteers and interns, editing videos from recent United Nations sessions, and creating questionnaires that would be used in international trainings that The Advocates staff would be holding. Even though these projects were small, I loved working on them because it gave me more insight into the specific ways that The Advocates engages with human rights work, and helped me figure out what kinds of human rights work I would like to have a career in.

The biggest takeaway of my internship was how non-profits function, specifically in a smaller non-profit that has a big international reach. I noticed that because there is a relatively small team, each staff member wears a few hats to keep the organization functioning. Up until this summer I hadn’t interned with a non-profit before, so this experience was incredibly beneficial in helping me learn about what sorts of organizations I would be interested in working for in the future.

For future Badger Reach Fellows interning at The Advocates for Human Rights, I would suggest branching out and connecting with the staff members who work in several different programs. Their knowledge and expertise about the field of human rights is invaluable. It was also beneficial for me to hear about the educational and career experiences that led each person to their job at The Advocates, realizing there is no one “right” path to this field. I am very grateful to the Badger Reach program for allowing me to explore what working in human rights and in the non-profit world is like through this
internship. It has definitely played a big role in helping me decide the career path that I want to pursue in the future.