This summer I worked as an intern at The Firm Consulting LLC. The Firm Consulting is the leading governmental affairs firm in the state, but the company does a range of activities. The most popular thing The Firm is hired to do is legislative lobbying for various businesses and organizations. They come to The Firm with a goal in mind, and we work to try and achieve that goal. In addition to lobbying, The Firm also offers procurement, business development, and community relations services. Although my internship was a general “whatever we need you to do” internship, I mostly worked on research and communications. I did most of my work at The Firm under the supervision of Mr. Julius, the owner, and Ninia, the Director of External Affairs. Their guidance was extremely helpful with my work in communications because they were both well versed in journalism, PR, and communication arts. As for the research aspect of my internship, my background in history was helpful to create thorough documents and databases that could be used in a variety of settings.

Although The Firm Consulting has dozens of clients, my work was focused on just a few so I would be able to really focus on each company’s initiative. My first project was with the Milwaukee Kitchen Cabinet, an organization that aims to connect restaurateurs with legislators, to create solutions for both parties’ issues. In the Kitchen Cabinet project I recruited new restaurants to join, worked on the newsletter, and helped promote an initiative called ProStart to legislators and potential new member restaurants. My next project was to research stories relevant to our clients to put in The Firm’s newsletter. This project included reading the proposed state budget and comparing it to the previous budget to show the clients the changes in spending between the two and any new provisions that could affect a particular client.
my largest project of all was setting up for a long term initiative, where I researched and compiled a database of over one hundred associations and chambers in the city of Milwaukee that would potentially be in support of the project we were beginning work on.

While I worked at The Firm Consulting, the importance of the principles of the Badger Reach program became very evident. The first principle of interconnectedness came to be very important when The Firm was visited by a recently elected senator as she was making a tour of important political organizations in Milwaukee. Although the purpose of the visit was just for her to meet us and find out what we do, I recognized that she was the representative of a district we were holding a large event in and invited her to attend. Even though both parties were already gaining by meeting each other, I was able to see how her dilemma of getting to know her new constituency and our event were related, and helped solve both problems.

The next principle that became important was that of relationships. The Firm is almost always working in collaboration with someone. They lobby legislators, work with community organizations, and even have clients collaborate and help each other using their various specialties. Over the summer I constantly connected with other people and organizations. When the new senator came to visit The Firm, we began to develop our relationship with her. By helping her with her problem we got our foot in the door, and now several conversations later we have shown to her that The Firm is trustworthy; therefore, she listens when we have something to say to her. This summer we were hired by a car company to get them on the Automated Vehicles Steering Committee. If we were to approach an unknown senator the job would likely be much more difficult as we need to convince the senator of not only the car company’s goals, but also our own trustworthiness. The chances of a no are much higher. But
because The Firm has a relationship with the new senator, she can “get our foot in the door” with other senators making our job much easier. Having the senator’s introduction signifies The Firm is trustworthy and the company’s goals are legitimate.

Finally, when I worked at The Firm Consulting I really had to consider the clients. In other internships this concept may be a bit more abstract, but it was very real at The Firm. We had real clients who hired us to achieve some goal for them whether it be legislative or with the community. Because I did a lot of communications work, I really had to consider this principle. Oftentimes I was writing or speaking on behalf of the client; therefore, I really had to think about that client’s goals and how they would articulate them. I became their voice, so I made it my job to research how that person or company presents themselves, so I could follow suit in my writing.

The Firm Consulting tends to work on large, long term projects rather than short daily activities. This can be pretty overwhelming especially if you are new and learning the ropes. In order to make the work more manageable and understandable, I took those large, long term goals and split them up into much more short term and focused goals. In the end the whole picture would come together, but much like a puzzle it was easier to go in small pieces rather than tackling the whole thing at once. This concept was especially apparent when The Firm took on a two year project. Instead of trying to work on bits of everything at once, the project was split into small sections and we went for each one at a time. In addition to splitting the projects into manageable goals, I also learned that it helps to directly engage with both legislators and people. When The Firm has a long term project, people often look at it and think “this will take them two years, I don’t need to think about that now”. This makes it hard to rally support and
lay the groundwork, but if we go out and talk with people and show them why they should care
many more people and organizations come on board to the project.

Because The Firm Consulting wears many hats, it can be very confusing for a new intern
to figure out what is going on. There are so many different jobs to do. But if a Badger Reach
fellow were to take this internship next year I would give them two pieces of advice. First, do
your research. The Firm works with so many different types of companies doing many different
things, so it is extremely helpful to know the client list. Simply knowing what each business
does will make your life so much easier. Second, volunteer for as many events as you can.
Going out and working these events will not only help you understand your work, but The Firm
does their very best to help you with networking. One of The Firm’s goals for their interns is to
get them hired by a client, so take advantage of every opportunity you get. If you do these two
things you should be just fine. They helped me through this summer, and they will continue
helping me this fall as I will be extending my internship into the fall semester and working out
of the Madison office.