

# Samantha Rothman – Program Reflection

*This summer, I worked at an organization in Milwaukee called Lead2Change, which helps match high school students with an internship program in their desired career field. The goal of the organization is to inspire youth to make a change in their community. I was fortunate enough to work with other college-aged students who were also interested in public policy, along with working under the Lead2Change board. I was involved in many tasks, including creating a new filing system for vendors, setting up and joining site visits, and working as an Advancement Coach for the interns interested in the law. We created a brand new filing system, which was sorted alphabetically by the specific vendor's name, and further sorted it by date. I conducted site visits where I would visit the interns at their career site and evaluate their individual progress by speaking to them and to their supervisor to make sure they were on track to completing their summer goals. I had many 'aha' moments during this experience, but the moment that sticks out the most was when the students gave testimonials on the last day. Every Thursday, the students would meet at the Milwaukee High School of the Arts and would receive coaching from myself and other Advancement Coaches, along with hearing from members of the Milwaukee community, learning about financial planning for college and getting studying tools. On the last Thursday, the students talked about how much Lead2Change had helped them, and how they were planning on taking the skills they learned through the program and apply them to school and their jobs. It was so rewarding to hear that because a lot of the time I questioned whether or not the students were getting anything out of it. The last Thursday when the students told us how happy they were to complete the program really validated all the hard work we put in this summer.*

*The location obviously matters, especially because a lot of the students grew up in an impoverished area of Milwaukee. Being able to see their transformation and their appreciation for the program was really inspiring and made the entire summer worthwhile. Coming from a predominately wealthy suburb outside of Milwaukee, it was eye opening to see what other children face in places not even ten miles from where I grew up. I never had to worry about where my meals were going to be coming from or worry about paying for all of my college education. I have never interacted on a personal level with students who come from poverty, and being able to work with them this summer made me more aware of the problems that the city of Milwaukee faces. At my high school, everyone was expected to graduate and go to college. But we were able to achieve that level of success because we had role models, teachers, and counselors who helped us along the way. A lot of the students in the Lead2Change program did not have the same resources that I had in high school, which is why I think the Lead2Change program is a great way to provide students with the resources and connections that they otherwise may not have available to them. The ability to give students those resources was what made being an Advancement Coach so rewarding.*

*Some specific takeaways that I can take away from my experience are the importance of directly engaging with the youth. It is one thing to see the segregation of Milwaukee, but it is completely different to actually engage with people who are directly affected by it. Setting short term and long term goals was sometimes a challenge because a lot of my goals were dependent on how well the students would perform. This was an interesting experience for me because it was completely new. I have never been in a position where my goals are dependent on other people. It was definitely hard to adjust at first, but it was incredibly rewarding when everything would come*

*together, and you could see the impact you were making on the student. I absolutely grew as a person during my time at Lead2Change, because I had to be more patient and considerate when working with the students.*

*Some tips or handoff materials that I would give to potential Badger Reach students is to prioritize time management and organizational skills. I am a very organized person when I just have to focus on my schedule, but it was difficult to learn how to manage numerous people's schedules along with my own.*