

Utilization of Student Interns in Long-Term Care Academic Programs: A Win-Win

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INTRODUCTION

Academic faculty have complex positions in a demanding environment. Historically, they have been expected to teach, conduct research, and provide service to the university. In recent years, faculty in long-term health care administration programs have had to extend their responsibilities to cover additional areas.

HYPOTHESES

Implementing a student intern program in a long-term health care administration program will be mutually beneficial.

The academic program will:

- be able to provide more high-impact practices than in past years
- increase student recruitment
- have a heightened presence at the university

Student Interns will:

- gain valuable personal and professional experiences
- learn and participate in programmatic recruitment and retention
- network with professionals in the field
- attend/plan events
- make valuable relationships with current faculty and future students

METHODOLOGY

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire (UWEC) Health Care Administration (HCAD) program implemented a student intern program for the first time.

- The Interim Director of the Center of Health Administration and Aging Services Excellence (CHAASE) sent an email to all HCAD majors in the first week of the fall semester, with a short description of the position.
- Applications were requested via email including the following questions:
 - i. Why are you interested in becoming a CHAASE Student Intern?
 - ii. What abilities based on the tasks above (social media, communications, marketing, event planning, office support roles, managing the CHAASE Suite) do you have to qualify for this position?
- After reviewing applications, the HCAD faculty hired two students, intentionally selecting one sophomore and one junior student.
- Students were paid via federal work study for five hours of work each week (at no cost to HCAD/CHAASE).
- Students were supervised by the CHAASE Interim Director and HCAD faculty, working from a weekly task list dedicated to a variety of internal and external outreach projects.

RESULTS

Hiring Student Interns for the UWEC HCAD program has proven beneficial for faculty, the program, and Interns themselves.

Faculty had more time to:

- focus on classroom activities
- attend recruiting events
- develop future plans for the program
- conduct research related to the long-term care field that will help students understand industry wide problems
- build relationships with Student Interns
- gain insight from Student Interns into programmatic decisions

Student Interns have enhanced the program through:

- conducting/attending additional recruiting events (e.g., WI HOSA and MN HOSA Conferences)
- coordinating and planning events (e.g., HCAD Open House, CHAASE Banquet)
- developing and disseminating marketing/informational resources (e.g., triannual newsletters, the CHAASE Annual Report, social media posts)
- assuming additional responsibilities previously held by faculty (e.g., increasing engagement in the Eau Claire community)
- building relationships with prospective/current HCAD students

Student Interns gained:

- skills that will benefit their future careers
- a deeper understanding of changes in the field of long-term care
- multiple professional contacts through their role
- networking skills and had opportunities to network with many influential people in the long-term care profession that are directly involved with CHAASE (Center for Health Administration and Aging Services Excellence)



2023 HCAD/CHAASE Spring Open House

Being a Student Intern has allowed me to have so many different opportunities like connecting with perspective students, knowing our program inside and out, and speaking with professors about classes within our program and what they can do to improve. Experiencing an internship will benefit not only Interns, but professors and other students by having a voice of someone who is in the program itself. There are endless opportunities to improve in any program and creating new experiences for perspective and current students has incredibly positive aspects.
- Jenna Thieding, Sophomore CHAASE Student Intern

Student Interns have brought great energy and enthusiasm to our college program, often going above and beyond to complete their assigned tasks. Additionally, our Interns have been able to provide a perspective and cultural insight into current students' needs. This opportunity has also provided valuable training and mentorship opportunities for students, allowing them to develop new skills and gain professional experience that will help them in their future careers.
- Dr. Frances Hawes, HCAD Assistant Professor

In my role, I'm grateful to have the opportunity to work directly with Student Interns, allowing me to connect with both HCAD students and the program. Our Student Interns provide a fresh perspective about the program and ideas to improve marketing and events that are more relatable and relevant to current students. Having Interns expands my teamwork skills by delegating, collaborating, and learning from them. Their dedication to the program drives their willingness to assist our team.
- Adrienne Sullivan, CHAASE Outreach and Events Coordinator

Hiring Student Interns has been a fantastic decision by our program – although it takes an investment of faculty time to mentor and supervise the Interns, it has allowed us to move so many “wouldn't it be great if we...” ideas off the “to do” list, as the students have been able to make them a reality. We've really been able to up our visibility with current students, alumni, and friends, with Interns managing our social media channels and developing and distributing newsletters, among other marketing efforts. In addition, they have been valuable sources of information to us when we have wanted to take a pulse on how something might be received by students, what might be most interesting to them, and more. Plus, it has been great getting to know our Interns better, and having those stronger relationships helps model how student-faculty relationships are beneficial to other students who see our friendly rapport in classes, observe as these students more freely volunteer to speak in class, approach the instructor with questions, and they even can serve as liaisons between the broader student body and faculty, as they feel comfortable enough to share with faculty issues about which larger groups of students may have a question or concern.
- Dr. Jennifer Jos-Artisensi, HCAD Professor and Program Director

An email was sent requesting a quote from faculty/staff about their experiences with Student Interns.



CHAASE Student Interns Jenna Thieding ('25) and Michael Schumacher ('24) at the 2022 MN HOSA Conference

CONCLUSION

Academic faculty and staff in long-term health care administration programs across the country may consider adopting a student intern program. The UW-Eau Claire HCAD program, faculty, and students have all found benefit, resulting in a stronger and more robust program.