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/recruit 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.

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).

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.

Being a Student Intern has allowed me to have no end of opportunities, like connecting with people in the field, making my presence known, and following up on great ideas. - Dr. Jennifer Sullivan, CHAASE Outreach and Events Coordinator

Hiring Student Interns for the UWEC HCAD program has been a fantastic decision by our program, allowing 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 these stronger relationships helps model how student-faculty relationships are beneficial to 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 turn us into 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. Frances Hawes, HCAD Assistant Professor

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 student's 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. Francis Hawes, HCAD Assistant Professor

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

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2023 HCAD/CHAASE Spring Open House