

February 1, 2001

Dear Intern Supervisor,

My name is Ken Gilbertson, and I am the academic advisor for UMD students who are studying to be Outdoor and Environmental Educators. I want to introduce myself and inform you of what I am expecting of my students during their internship.

To begin, I want to let you know that I appreciate your efforts and your willingness to work with our students as an intern.

Our program is founded upon Outdoor Education principles where we teach our students how to be educators about the outdoors using both Environmental Education and Adventure Education skills, methods, and theories.

In addition, we have our students teaching real audiences from elementary aged children through older adults as soon as they begin college. Our students typically have had several years of experience as an outdoor educator with experience in sea kayaking, canoeing, whitewater paddling, x-c skiing, and/or rock climbing instruction; back country leadership; and with a wide range of audiences and skills levels.

A student's final education experience is their internship. I view the internship similarly to what a student teaching experience is for a school teacher. It is the final learning experience that takes place in the work place where a student polishes their professional training. I look for our students to design lessons and programs, teach a great deal using a variety of methods and skills, evaluate lesson and program outcomes, work with management aspects such as budgeting, staffing, staff development, fund raising, marketing, and interacting with the board of directors. (I realize that much of the management aspects often only allow for the student to observe.)

I also require students to conduct some sort of research project that is directly relevant to their on-site internship setting. This is the piece where students learn how to observe, investigate, and conclude some key component of the agency operation on their own - beyond simply making an anecdotal observation. Typically, this project is a formal evaluation of an aspect of the program such as a new curricula; or, designing a new program; studying some sort of natural phenomenon; conducting an evaluation of students to determine if they are learning what the agency thinks they should be learning; etc.

I ask that all these things be built into the students' daily duties, rather than "teach all day, and get to that other stuff when you can."

What I require of paper work from students are:

□ Weekly reports that are summaries of what happened during the week and projections of what will happen the following week. This is reflective and is intended to allow the student to begin to see the "big picture" of the profession. I require that the direct supervisor sign these each week. This also encourages the student to be in routine contact with their supervisor. □ They must also submit two lessons or program plans to indicate the extent of their planning as well as to fine-tune any problems in planning. Both of the above are typically quite simple because they are usually requirements or practices within the agency and so are not extra demands on work.

□ The final two assignments are the write-up of the final paper and a synopsis of the overall internship experience.

□ A written internship evaluation by you is the final requirement.

It is helpful for me to hear from you how prepared my students are for your agency, and how they can be better prepared.

In conclusion, it is my responsibility to prepare students to step into their internship so that they can function professionally and benefit the agency appropriately. Still, I realize the effort of the agency and the

site supervisor in mentoring a student. This experience is so much more than simply hiring another employee.

As such, I deeply appreciate your willingness to work with our students as interns. I am quite confident our intern will be an excellent contribution to your program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ken Gilbertson

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