



CDWSP CENTRAL

Nurturing the Next Generation of Community Development Professionals

CDWSP Internships Highlight Interconnectedness Between OUP Programs

Although each Office of University Partnership grant program has specific goals—from nurturing the next generation of community development professionals to helping to build tomorrow’s communities today—the activities and initiatives they develop to achieve these goals often complement each other. This interest in a common goal presents grantees from different programs with the opportunity to collaborate with each other on the same project. In addition, by collaborating on projects, grantees may benefit from partnerships established through other programs.

How beneficial is this interconnectedness of the grant programs? Just ask Community Development Work Study Program (CDWSP) fellows Kelly Hoffman and Stephanie Schoenberg from the University of Pittsburgh, and India Birdsong from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Their universities received both CDWSP and Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants, and they were granted internships with their university’s COPC, organizations that were community partners with the COPC, or COPC interns at a community nonprofit.

University of Pittsburgh

CDWSP Fellows Intern for COPC Community Partners

The University of Pittsburgh COPC has provided internships for several CDWSP fellows with its community partners. Kelly Hoffman, a 2001 CDWSP recipient, served one of her three required



Kelly Hoffman.

internships as a community organizer at Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC), the University of Pittsburgh COPC’s primary Oakland community partner. OPDC is a nonprofit community-based organization that has been instrumental in ongoing master planning efforts, neighborhood development, and creation of affordable housing in Pittsburgh’s Oakland community.

During her 9-month internship with this COPC partner, Hoffman coordinated several initiatives, including an annual renter awareness campaign on building codes and landlord/tenant rights, and the Keep It Clean Oakland campaign.

For the renter awareness and landlord/tenant rights campaign, Hoffman helped develop a brochure to educate students about their rights and responsibilities as tenants. “There are still long-term homeowners in the neighborhood, and tensions can arise between them and the students, the short-term residents,” says Hoffman. “With these brochures, students were provided with basic but important information such as when to empty their trash and to be respectful of their neighbors.”

Through the Keep it Clean Oakland campaign, Hoffman coordinated monthly adopt-a-block neighborhood cleanups in the Oakland community. She determined which streets were to be cleaned based on their conditions and then assigned groups to clean them. These groups included University of Pittsburgh students, local residents, and community groups—from fraternities and sororities to the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh

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and more. "Every street in a target cleanup area in the Oakland community was adopted," says Hoffman. "The first Saturday of each month, the groups clean the assigned streets." Hoffman also coordinated biannual trash collections in Oakland during student move-in and move-out periods. "Each year when students move in and out of Oakland, we collect a great deal of trash and debris, such as old furniture, appliances, and other discarded tenant property, that would otherwise clog Oakland sidewalks and streets," explains Hoffman.

Another University of Pittsburgh CDWSP fellow, Stephanie Schoenberg, interned with the university's COPC, where she helped establish the COPC Working Group on Housing and Community Housing Resource Center in collaboration with OPDC. In addition, she assisted in helping to organize the 2002 COPC National Conference held in Pittsburgh. Schoenberg also provided support for organizing regular COPC partner forums and in grantwriting related to COPC and its community partners' efforts.

Under Schoenberg's leadership, the Working Group on Housing identified the need for a free housing outreach center in the community and worked collectively to fill this gap in service. "OPDC offered a vacant storefront for such a center in their three-story office building," says Schoenberg. "The university's own Housing Resource Center, which helps students, faculty, and staff find suitable housing in the Pittsburgh area, freely shared their expertise to help determine

what information was necessary to provide. Other community partners donated materials on renting, homeownership, and relocating. Thus, the COPC Housing Resource Center Satellite Outreach Office was born."

Schoenberg also supported the 2002 COPC National Conference by creating welcome bags and organizing community tours for the more than 300 conference attendees. The welcome bags featured materials on University of Pittsburgh's COPC, its community partners, guides for navigating Pittsburgh, and an assortment of promotional brochures. The community tours enabled conference goers to learn about the neighborhoods and community partners with which the university's COPC works in a variety of ways, including biking, walking, and riding buses.

"One of the biggest lessons I learned interning with the university's COPC is that no matter how capable I am, I cannot fully be successful without the help and knowledge of others," says Schoenberg.

Within the University of Pittsburgh COPC, CDWSP fellows have made a difference, especially to the work of COPC community partners.

University of Illinois at Chicago

CDWSP and COPC Fellows Intern at The Enterprising Kitchen

The Enterprising Kitchen (TEK) is a nonprofit corporation that provides job training and employment opportunities for women who are living in poverty in Chicago. It operates a light manufacturing company that enables local women to participate in a workforce development program that includes paid employment, life-skills and employment training, and a variety of other support services.



India Birdsong.

While many participants in the program have challenging personal histories, often including substance abuse and homelessness, they are motivated and

committed to building independent and sustainable livelihoods. Students from the University of Illinois at Chicago's (UIC) CDWSP and COPC programs interned with TEK to help these women maximize their individual potential.

CDWSP fellow India Birdsong interned with TEK from October 2004 to May of 2005. As an intern, Birdsong helped to research grant opportunities and write grant proposals, identified and coordinated new resources that are used by participants and staff in their workforce development program, and assisted in managing the social enterprises that TEK is engaged in, such as budget meetings, marketing, non-profit networking, and participant interactions. According to Valerie Werner, CDWSP program coordinator and assistant to the director of Urban Planning and Policy program, the COPC interns worked at broadening the program participants' job skills by teaching them how to use computer software programs, as well as working on identifying potential funding sources.

"I appreciated TEK's business savvy, something that I think is needed as a backbone in struggling communities," says Birdsong. "I agreed with their motivation for economic independence, where participants fused the heart of nonprofits with the economic benefits of a for-profit business. TEK seemed to understand the necessary balance between give and take."

Birdsong also attended trade and holiday shows where she sold TEK's products and promoted their mission. It was during these shows that Birdsong began to trust and befriend the women in the program.

"They were all phenomenal women in their own right," says Birdsong. "Often times, friendly conversation would be the best way to break the ice with them, which often led to advice, laughter, and a higher comfort level that made our jobs a lot easier."

Resume writing also became a component of Birdsong's job, and she assisted a few women with completing paperwork required to apply for full-time jobs. "I am happy to report that since I have left TEK, a good number of those women have moved on to those full-time jobs for which we worked so hard to apply," says Birdsong.

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“At TEK, I also researched and wrote their newsletter. Overall, TEK is a small business with a big heart. I found my time there to be useful, more to the participants than to the business itself. Working at TEK forced me to look closer at how communities are lacking general respect and technical skills needed to compete in the workforce. I believe that true community



Valerie Werner.

development is the act of providing opportunities and showing individuals that there is more than one way to achieve a goal.”

“With the learning opportunities the CDWSP and COPC interns receive at TEK and the assistance the interns provide to the agency, it is a win-win experience for everyone involved,” says Werner.

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Virginia Tech CDWSP Helps Student Expand Horizons

When LaShonia Michelle Murphy entered graduate school at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VT) in 2000, she was at a crossroads. Having received a bachelor's degree in accounting, she wanted to use her skills to make a contribution to community development but was not sure how she could apply her accounting skills to community development. Murphy was directed to the university's Community Development Work Study Program (CDWSP), and it was there that she discovered that working on housing issues would help her fulfill her career goal.

Expanding Horizons

Before participating in the CDWSP, Murphy had minimal knowledge about housing and community development, but through its comprehensive program offerings, Murphy began to build her ideal career. Every Friday, the program offered a seminar on a specific housing issue. These sessions engaged students in discussions on a plethora of theories and strategies, allowing Murphy to build a solid foundation on core public and nonprofit community development issues.

In addition to these weekly seminars, Murphy further strengthened her knowledge of community development by attending several conferences, including the Commonwealth of Virginia's Annual Housing Conference, and participating in CDWSP-sponsored field trips. During these trips—which included Williamsburg, Virginia; Washington, DC; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—students toured housing developments/projects and attended presentations by housing professionals. In addition to gaining valuable knowledge, Murphy began creating a network of housing and community development professionals in every sector and all levels.



LaShonia Michelle Murphy.

Murphy currently serves as a mortgage-backed securities specialist at the Government National Mortgage Association's (Ginnie Mae). She credits the CDWSP for expanding her horizons, and the mentoring of Dr. Ted Koebel, the director of VT's Virginia Center for Housing Research and a professor of urban studies, for guiding her career.

“Without a doubt, the CDWSP was one of the best things to happen to me professionally,” says Murphy. “I was very fortunate to work under Dr. Koebel, a renowned expert and researcher with over 30 years of urban planning and housing experience. Dr. Koebel chose my first year's internship project with Virginia's Homelessness Commission, and, although he didn't help design my coursework, his impact was strong. I worked in the same office with him for one year. I was able to meet and speak with several members of the housing and community development network. I was able to engage in intellectual debates regarding housing and community development all the time. Therefore, I tailored my coursework to housing and community development.”

VT Internships: Hands-on Learning

During her graduate program, Murphy had three very diverse internships. Her first assignment was with Virginia's Homelessness Commission. During

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this one-year internship, Murphy designed, implemented, evaluated, and coauthored the “2001 Virginia Rural Housing Survey,” which was presented to the housing committee of Virginia’s General Assembly.

For her second assignment, Murphy interned with the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization, (NNEO) Inc. For this nationally recognized local community development corporation in Roanoke, Virginia, Murphy wrote grant proposals, helped set up an afterschool program for latch-key children in the VT neighborhood, and performed general work regarding the properties owned by NNEO.

During her final semester, Murphy worked for the Community Foundation of the New River Valley in Christiansburg, Virginia, which awards grants to organizations or individuals in the New River Valley community several times a year. Murphy processed, reviewed, and scored grant applications and conducted reviews of programs that received the grants. Some included soup kitchens, homeless shelters, Reading Is Fundamental programs, and community centers.

Invaluable Tools

Murphy refers to her assignments with CDWSP as “invaluable tools,” introducing her to basic concepts and the gamut of issues that encompass community development.

The knowledge gained through the CDWSP seminars and field trips, the hands-on experience obtained through her internships, and the connections established through the networking opportunities provided have allowed Murphy to succeed in her career. “Through my internships and seminar work, I became more aware of the serious shortfalls of affordable housing,” said Murphy. “One major impediment to affordable housing development is housing finance. My job at Ginnie Mae is to help increase the liquidity in the investment market by securitizing government housing loans, such as Federal Housing Administration, Veterans Affairs, and Rural Housing Service loans. These extra funds are in turn used to finance multifamily affordable housing units by both nonprofit and for-profit entities.”

Michelle Murphy is currently a mortgage-backed securities specialist at the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae), Multifamily Programs. Her career with the federal government began with her acceptance into the Presidential Management Fellowship program in 2002.