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The Unlikely Resources Provided by Human Resources

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The Unlikely Resources Provided By Human Resources

By: Molly Mattingly

My freshman year, I thought I wanted to study abroad for my broadening experience. I had planned to study abroad in Edinburgh the spring semester of my junior year. Those plans came to a halt after my freshman year ended. I had made amazing friends, joined a sorority, and decided that I did not want to give any of that up, even for a semester abroad. Also, the summer after my senior year of high school, I had spent a month backpacking across Europe. I had traveled before, so I wanted something new. This led me to choosing to partake in an internship instead. After three years of social justice classes, I knew I wanted my internship to be with some sort of nonprofit organization. One of the biggest contributing factors to me choosing a nonprofit was when a worker from a local Arkadelphia nonprofit spoke during my Introduction to Social Justice class. People who work for nonprofits want to be there, and they have a heart for the people they work with. This is shown through their actions and how they hold themselves accountable to their cause. People who work in non-profit do not go into it for great salaries and incredible benefits. My preference for my internship was for it to be a Christian nonprofit, but I was not going to be too particular. Living in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and having parents as long-term educators, there were plenty of options. That gave me a great advantage. I knew that interning for a Christian nonprofit meant that there was a good chance I would not be paid, but I was able to live at home so the money did not matter to me. I had given up studying abroad; I wanted an incredible experience.

For my broadening experience, I interned at East-West Ministries International. East-West Ministries is a non-profit organization in Plano, Texas. Their primary goal is to mobilize, evangelize, equip, and multiply believers in the spiritually darkest areas of the world. East-West Ministries is located in the Hope Center. The first of its kind, The Hope Center is a building that is home to over forty different nonprofit organizations and gives back over \$2 million to the community each year. A vision of June Hunt, The Hope Center fosters collaboration among the non-profits it houses. At East-West, I worked with the Human Resources Department under manager, Jessica Garrett. I chose East-West for a multitude of reasons. My personal mentor, Jimmy Bryan, is an employee there, and I have seen how he has been able to touch lives through the organization and the joy he has when he talks about his job, the places he's going, and the lives he's changing. I wanted the same thing. After I researched the organization on my own, I fell in love with everything for which they stand. Their amazing founder, John Maisel, was a captain in the United States Marine Corps and had multiple trips behind the Iron Curtain. Now, his passion is reaching people across the world who have not heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. East-West Ministries supports missionaries across 50 different countries and enables those missionaries to do their jobs well. After learning about what East-West stood for, I knew I wanted to be a part of the organization and the people who worked there.

Originally, I had planned to spend a summer during my college career overseas in Thailand with one of the missionaries. I love traveling to new places and jumping into adventures and opportunities that may hold great uncertainties. In the middle of

planning this adventure, two planes crashed and burst into flames while landing at their airport within a month. There was an opportunity for me to spend a summer in Brazil with a single woman missionary who owns a dance studio. I have been a dancer since I was 2, and I love the beach. This sounded like a perfect match. As the logistics were playing out, we found out that I would be on my own for periods of time. It was off season so the ministry was limited. The missionary was uneasy about having me. This made my family and close friends extremely uneasy about sending me there as well. If they would have let me, I would have packed my bags and still gone. I would have gone anywhere I felt God leading me. Sadly, due to these accidents and continued political unrest throughout the world, my plans had to change. This is when Jimmy offered to see if there were any internships left in the home office. Thankfully, there was one - in the human resources department. I logged on to their website, and applied immediately.

My degree will be in Social Justice and Psychology, so I knew going to work in Human Resources was going to be a challenge. My knowledge of HR extended from the character Toby in the television show, *The Office*, and that was about it. I was not knowledgeable in insurance, conducting trainings, or dealing with benefits. This was the only internship position East-West had open, so I jumped at the opportunity. When I first applied, they called me on a Tuesday morning for a phone interview. Before the interview started, the interviewer prayed for me. This took me by surprise. It reminded me of my professors at Ouachita, so naturally I was more comfortable. The phone interview lasted about thirty minutes, and it included the typical interview questions, along with consent for a background check. Because of the places some of the

missionaries are stationed, it is important to make sure that the employees supporting them at home are trustworthy and have honorable intentions. A few days later, they emailed me and asked me to come in to meet with them in person. I had interviewed before, but I was nervous for this. Everything I had interviewed for was a fun job like a batting cage or Roughriders Baseball Stadium. This was my first, what I like to call, “big girl job” interview. There were so many aspects that I had never thought about. I would be driving to and from Dallas in rush hour traffic, gaining security clearance, and keeping up with my badge that let me in the building. I had never even gone a semester without losing my school ID. I may be able to beg my way into the cafeteria for lunch at Ouachita, but I would not be able to do that at the Hope Center. This was the first time I met my supervisor, Jessica. She offered me the summer internship, and I gladly accepted. I was excited because there was going to be another college girl in her 20’s interning with me as well.

I was not sure what my duties as a human resource intern would entail. For all I knew, I would be filing paperwork and making the morning coffee runs. I went into this experience with an open mind and an open heart. I was there to serve and learn. I worked Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9am to 4pm. I would set out my limited clothes option every night. I never realized how hard it would be to find clothes that are professional, but where I do not look like somebody’s grandmother. This seems goofy to some people, but it was important to me. I was one of the youngest people in the office, but I did not want to dress like a child. My XXL sorority shirts and Nike shorts, which was usually my daily attire, were not going to cut it. I needed to dress for the job I

wanted which meant dressing professionally. I also never realized how hard it would be to find shoes and clothes that were cute, comfortable, and professional. Look good while working hard. My days usually started off by showing up at least 5 minutes early, around 8:55am. Then, I would grab a sticky note and make a bet with myself on how late the other intern would be - which was at least 10 minutes late every single day all summer. Other than that, everyday looked different for me. I never knew what to expect from day to day. I typically worked on long-term projects. Every Tuesday morning at 11:00, Jessica and I had a one-on-one meeting. One-on-ones are short, 30 minute to an hour meetings with your supervisor where the two of you discuss the state of the current project or projects you are working on and what you have next to work on. What was very cool and interesting about this was that every single person in the office did this at different times of the week with their supervisor, all the way up to the CEO. Jessica was not afraid to challenge me. She gave me assignments in which I had no idea even where to begin. For example, I interviewed CPAs to see who was qualified to handle overseas ministry taxes. I created an emotional intelligence questionnaire for future interviewees, and I researched and wrote proposals for different benefits packages. We did not learn about this in class! During my time there I learned how to deal with confidential and sensitive information. There was an incident where one of the employees was being fired, and I had to draft the letter releasing him of his duties at East-West. I also wrote and mailed the letters to all of his sponsors explaining the situation. I was also given the fun jobs! For example, I decorated for the monthly birthday celebrations. This was one of my favorite assignments. It was a huge success,

and many people actually stayed and visited rather than just going straight back to work! I also wrote thank you cards to donors, spoke in front of the entire organization giving weekly HR updates, and organized lunch-ins with missionaries who were visiting from overseas. This was the most enjoyable part of the job. I am not someone who thrives behind a desk. I enjoy doing things for people, helping with training, and sitting in on face to face meetings.

Aside from the large projects and fun jobs, I did smaller tasks as well that were not necessarily my strong suit or favorite part of the job. However, these small tasks taught me important life skills to know in any job occupation. It also grew my appreciation for all human resource workers. These small responsibilities were probably the most frustrating for me. I was extremely unfamiliar with insurance, benefits, retirement plans, and payroll. I not only had to acquaint myself with these areas of the job, but I had to learn how to incorporate them into the job. I also learned to carry around a pen and notepad everywhere I went. I found myself having to write on my arms a few times, but I remembered fast to just carry one with me. Whether it was sitting in on meetings or listening to a conversation between Jessica and a colleague, she would tell me to write something down so that she would not forget. Prior to this internship, I had worked hard to turn in decent work, but this job demanded more from me. I couldn't let Jimmy down: I couldn't let Jessica down, and I didn't want to let myself down. This internship taught me to expect more from myself. I did not want to finish a project that was anything other than fabulous.

There were about 15 other college students who interned with East-West. Going into this, I thought I would have become friends with all of them quickly. I am very social and make and keep friends easily. Turns out, I did not become friends with any of the other interns. We had meetings as a whole every Tuesday afternoon at 2:00, and honestly, it was pretty lonely. The interns had become friends within their departments and in departments that were close in location in the office to each other. Because my fellow human resources intern and I did not get along very well, and she saw the time to work as a time to socialize, she made friends with other interns while I was completely swamped with assignments from Jessica. I spent most of my time working on projects, even during my lunch breaks. If I ate lunch with anyone, I ate with the adult workers at East-West. I really did not mind this because I would rather have spent my time with the adults rather than the other interns, but it did not feel any less lonely when it was required for us to spend time together. Typically, I get along easily with college students my age. I usually get along with everyone. What was frustrating was that I felt as if they were not taking their time at East-West seriously. They were always sitting around each other's cubicles and talking about their plans for the weekend, a craft they were working on, and one time I found my fellow human resource intern Googling how to open a beer without a bottle opener. She took naps and worked on her sorority's Recruitment activities while I had a long list of things to do. While it was infuriating watching her doing nothing, I found energy in knowing that Jessica trusted me. She gave me tasks that were hard, tasks that challenged me. I learned that I would have much rather been given things to do everyday than have nothing at all to do. By watching employees and

other interns, I learned how to be a good employee. I learned some great things to do, and I learned especially what not to do. I watched girls sit on the floor and talk about a sleepover they had planned for the night, and what they wanted to do. I overheard the other human resources intern ask if she could work from home that day because she was tired and did not want to be there. This made me take extra pride in the work I did. I did not complain or become frustrated when Jessica added another task to the list. I was flattered that I was given work knowing it would be finished and finished well. The lack of appreciation and respect of many of the others actually inspired me to be even better. I wanted to get the most out of this internship, and I did.

Overall, all of my classes I have taken at Ouachita prepared me for this internship in some way. Did I have any clue what I was doing a majority of the time there? Absolutely not. The Social Justice department cannot prepare everyone for every opportunity. Instead, I was prepared for high expectations. I was prepared to problem solve. I was prepared to work with others and think outside the box. Even my time as a member of The Women of EEE played a positive role in my success as an intern and will ultimately help me as I move into a permanent position as a graduate. The Social Justice Department, along with my overall experience at OBU, has prepared me for whatever comes my way. The three classes that prepared me the most for my internship were Fundamentals of Public Speaking, Personality, and Introduction to Social Justice. Many other classes played key roles also. In regards to my public speaking class, Jessica gave me countless opportunities to speak in front of large and small groups of people. I prepared multiple presentations for myself and other staff

members, made the opening and/or closing remarks at meetings, and helped in different ways during the staff training seminars. In public speaking, we worked on eye contact, how to efficiently set up presentations, and how to structure speeches. Also, my personality class with Dr. Fayard helped me with building relationships. In that class we learned how extremely different every individual is and how to handle a variety of people. Human resources is obviously very people oriented. One of the projects I was assigned was coming up with an idea of how to improve staff relationships and boost morale. The course in personality reminded me that I needed to come up with an idea that appealed to everyone in the office, not just people like me. The most helpful class I took was an introduction to social justice class with Dr. Houser. During that class, we explored the meaning of what social justice really is. My time in that class helped me discover my own definition of social justice. It was exciting to recognize that East-West Ministries embodied my definition. The missionaries uprooted their lives in the United States and traveled to an unknown country where Christianity is not easily taught or even welcome. The staff in the office did whatever they could to support the missionaries - donations, prayer, and actively setting up mission trips. One of the greatest lessons my social justices classes taught me was how to problem solve efficiently. Even if I did not understand something, I knew how to figure it out, by myself, and go from there. I did not have to rely on anyone, but at the same time I knew how to ask good questions that produced good answers.

During the last few weeks of my internship, Jessica called me into her office to talk. This was not unusual because she did this all the time. This time she asked me to sit down and that I did not need my notepad. This was unusual. She said that she enjoyed having me around and appreciated everything that I was doing. Then, she asked if I wanted to stay on staff and work remotely for her from school. She said that the company had only done this once before with an intern. Of course, I said yes. I went into my senior year of college with an internship and enrolled in 18 hours semester. Thankfully, Jessica was extremely flexible with my crazy college student schedule. I worked around 3 to 4 hours a week, and Jessica called to have our one-on-ones every Tuesday. Those Tuesday check-ins became something that I looked forward to. They provided consistency and encouragement for me. Sometimes, she would not have any new projects for me to take on, but other times, there were lists of things for me to do - all at my convenience. Jessica and I became close friends my first semester senior year. She would confide in me over work or personal issues, and I would ask her advice with school or roommate problems. Whenever I was home for a weekend, fall break, Thanksgiving, or Christmas I would go and work in the office. The Plano office environment, The Hope Center, is the ideal work environment. East-West Ministries is by no means perfect; it certainly has its issues. However, the people there handle their issues differently than the other businesses in which I have worked. I love being surrounded by people who shared the same values and belief system as I do. East-West is a safe space to ask for prayers and pray for others, and I had never had that in a job before. I go back every chance I get just to sit in my little intern cubical. In

March, I was invited to a gala that was honoring our founder. I had never been to a gala, and was not sure what it would entail. I am extremely thankful I asked my mom and another adult mentor for help. The gala consisted mainly of our upper class, philanthropic business sponsors and donors. It was by far the nicest and fanciest event I have ever attended. Most of the women had on dresses that were more expensive than both of my prom dresses put together! I had the opportunity to meet all kinds of people from across the world who had flown in for this specific event. I made connections and contacts with the socialites and many of the most powerful businessmen in Dallas.

Even though I love my supervisor, coworkers, and job (for the most part) I know it is not what I want to do. When I was invited back for a gala, I sat with Jessica, her husband, my long-time mentor Jimmy, and a few other coworkers. We had a wonderful time, and at the end before I left, Jessica pulled me aside. She said there was a new position opening up in the HR department and was wondering if I would be interested. I told her I would think about it, and I did. During my time at East-West I realized that I want to be out in the field instead of in a desk. I now know enough about filing paperwork, benefits, and insurance to understand how they work, but that is all I care about learning with regard to insurance. I am ready to do something else now. I want to support East-West now by being a donor and mission trip attendee rather than an employee. I turned down the job, and after a year, my internship is coming to a close along with my senior year. An internship that was only supposed to last 2 ½ months ended up lasting 10 months. Gaining an internship with East-West was one of the best things that has ever happened to me, just like choosing to attend OBU and choosing to

major in Social Justice and Psychology. I now know more about the inside workings of a non-profit than I would have even known. Human resources is like the nuts and bolts of any organization. Without this department, nothing can function. And, if someday the field gets tiresome or I am unable to continue there, I would consider something like Human Resources so I could provide opportunities like Jessica provided me.

Reflecting back on my experience with East-West Ministries, my internship taught me things about myself that I never knew. First, I learned how hard I could work. Human resources gave me multiple projects that I did not know I was capable of not only doing, muchless doing them well. I juggled multiple projects and stayed on task which was not something I was used to doing or had ever done before. There would be times where I would be working on four or five different projects at one time, and there was still a list of things that needed to be done. Because I held my boss in such high regard, I wanted the work to be perfect when I gave it to her. This meant extra time on projects, constantly rechecking my work, and learning how to manage my time efficiently. Secondly, I learned more about what I want to do in my life. It was at East-West, talking with visiting missionaries that I learned I was interested in working for the government in emergency management and disaster relief. Overseas missionaries sometimes struggle with the U.S government while deployed, so I became interested in becoming a liaison for those missionaries and the government. I was able to sit with a couple who was serving in North Korea before Americans were not able to travel there, and they said it was the U.S government they had the most issues with. I found this interesting because I thought it would be the North Korean government who would have

caused the most issues; I was wrong. I would love to play a role in supporting these missionaries within the confines of the government. Finally, I learned the importance of building relationships within a job. This does not just mean friendships, but it means any sort of relationship. I was thrown into an organization where everyone was older, more mature and experienced, and all professionals. Through the small things, I learned how important having a relationship with everyone is. Within the human resources department, there were three people on the team - Jason, Kayla, and Jessica. It was intimidating coming into this dynamic because of how close the team was. One day, I was downstairs in the cafe ordering a lunch that I could not actually afford. Jason was ordering at the cash register beside me. When I was finished ordering, he told the cashiers that he would be paying for my meal, and when I tried to refuse, he would not take no for an answer. This is something that he probably saw as so little, but it meant a lot to me. It was not in a weird creepy way either. He was married and did not try to hit on me after. Instead, he was just being nice and welcoming. I realized then how important relationships with your coworkers was. The team did everything they could to make me feel welcomed and like I was a part of their team. I was there working on my 22nd birthday, and when I showed up at my cubicle, it was completely decorated with streamers, confetti, and presents. For lunch, they took me to one of my favorite places and bought my lunch for me. Showing appreciation and developing camaraderie, or maybe call it developing a positive culture in the workplace, is something that was not only shared verbally, but it was also modeled in every decision that was made.

As for the future social justice majors thinking about what to do for their broadening experience, I have a couple of tips. First off, choose something in which you are passionate. If you are passionate about traveling, then study abroad. Don't go someplace because it is the "cool" place to go. Go wherever you think you will learn the most and have the most fun. Your broadening experience is supposed to be a learning opportunity, but it is also something you are supposed to have fun with. It is the same thing if you want to complete an internship. If you are passionate about animals, then intern with a rescue center. If you are passionate about children, try to work for your local child's advocacy center. Research an organization before you go apply for anything as well. The more you know, the easier it will be to choose what you want to do. My second piece of advice would be, do not be turned off, or even embarrassed, if it is an unpaid internship. I was nervous when I learned my internship was going to be unpaid. Some of my friends were making \$20 an hour interning. No amount of money could make up for what I learned during my time there. Every friend had a paid internship last summer, but I know for a fact that I got the most out of my summer. No, it wasn't easy, but I'd do it again if I was given the chance. My next piece of advice would be to not limit yourself, and do things in which you are uncomfortable. When you force yourself to do new things, that is when you learn the most. If you are comfortable, then you are not getting better. You don't grow in your comfort zone. If you are passionate about something, but are not knowledgeable over the topic, then do it anyway and learn! After, you will be passionate and educated, which is a fierce combination. Do not say "no" because you are afraid of the unknowns. When I was asked to speak at the

quarterly staff meeting, I was terrified, and I did not want to do it. It was that same meeting I spoke at (and almost turned down) that the CEO of East-West began to ask around wondering who I was. He said I was a natural up there, and wanted me to be a part of his company. If I had said no because I was scared, he may have never known my name. So do things you do not think you can do because you will be so proud of yourself by the end of it. When you are at the internship continue to push yourself. Talk to people in different departments that you never would have before. Push your personal limits, and do not do anything that is less than exceptional. You will mess up because it is new, but learn from it and move on. Developing and showing your ability to work through failure is the only way to find success. Take on projects that are hard, and finish them early. Show up to work at least 10 minutes early every day. Just because it is an "internship" does not mean it does not matter. You get out of it what you put into it, so put your all into it. Just do it. Lastly, research your options. There are organizations and companies out there that you have never heard of that need your help. It is easy to think of the big places that everyone has heard about, but do your research. I would have never known about East-West Ministries if it were not for Jimmy getting a job there, and introducing me to the non-profit. Whether it is big or small, you can make a difference. Do not limit yourself to your surroundings either. Research organizations in places you have connections that you could spend the summer somewhere. Change is scary, but man it is fun. If you can gain an internship for your dream company in another state, then do it. Make a plan and get your application or letter of interest done early. The earlier you do it, the more time you have to look at all of your options. I had the

opportunity to intern with the Texas State Department and the Attorney General, but because I waited too long, I lost that chance. I wish I had known and done both of them in different summers. They were so different, yet so interesting. I could have done it, but I ran out of time. Plan ahead. This broadening experience can change your life if you let it. You can gain lifelong friendships with the most random people. Be passionate, work hard, and make Ouachita proud wherever you go.

I do not know where I would be without my broadening experience with East-West Ministries. The supposed-to-be two month internship turned into so much more. I gained knowledge and friends that will carry me through the rest of my life. I am thankful that the Social Justice program makes their students participate in either an internship or study abroad. I believe that it is essential to applying what we learn in class to the outside world. Our classroom knowledge is not helpful if we cannot see how it pertains to the outside world. Also, I believe that after the broadening experience is finished, it emphasizes why future classes are so important and helpful. After my internship, I saw things I learned in class differently because I had a new perspective of the outside world, and something that I would relate the information back to. My internship taught me what kind of boss and leader I wanted to be as well. In the future, I hope to be a compassionate leader whose team thrives. I want my team to learn and grow and not be afraid to fail. I want them to want to be their best the way I wanted to please Jessice - not because they are scared I will rip them into pieces, but because they do not want to let me or the organization down. I want to be a leader who understands mistakes, but does not accept laziness or sloppiness. I saw what kind of

boss and leader Jessica was to the human resource team and the office, and I know I want to be like that. There will be human resources wherever I work, and I will have the utmost appreciation for them wherever I go. It is not an easy job. It can be fun, but it is hard. There are so many technical and legal layers to the department that without it, organizations would not be able to function and people would not be able to be paid properly. Finally, I also learned what kind of employee I want to be and can be. Coming out of college, I will not be in any sort of high ranking job. I will have to work hard to ever get to the top, and I am perfectly fine with that. I have learned what I am capable of through this experience. I have seen the best of the best, but I have also seen the not-so-great. I am going to be the best of the best in my job - whether it is a high corner office, small intern cubical, or flooded, decimated streets. Regardless of what I do, loyalty, commitment, focus, and hard work are all things I will bring to my job, and I have East-West Ministries and my time and professors at OBU to thank for that.