Week 2 at Propeller

Mon, 05/23/2016 - 00:00

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It is now the end of my second week at Propeller, and I am feeling settled as a development intern.

Honestly, I am still learning all that Propeller does after two weeks! It is a very innovative and complicated organization. Basically, Propeller is a nonprofit incubator and accelerator for startups—both for-profit and nonprofit–that help the New Orleans community in solving social, economic, and environmental problems in educational equity, healthcare, food security, and water management. If you have ever heard of social entrepreneurship, that is a good way to explain what Propeller does.

Propeller hosts pitch competitions and conducts research to decide which ventures it will accept into its accelerator programs. It then provides its startups, or "ventures," with mentorship, access to networks, pro bono resources, and office space at its 10,000 square foot facility in the Broadmoor neighborhood of New Orleans. Some of the companies and nonprofits it has helped to accelerate include a healthcare software company, a consultant company to connect schools with healthy food services, a company that builds green roofs, and food market in the lower Ninth Ward.

I am a fund development intern, so I help Propeller apply for grants, talk to funders, and raise money in general so it can continue to accelerate and incubate ventures that solve social problems. So far, I've been drafting emails and reports, helping set up events for funders, attending meetings, and doing research for my supervisor on various grants. I've also been learning about Salesforce, the new software that Propeller is switching to manage its databases. However, once I'm completely "on-boarded," I should be able to do even more, which I'm excited about.

I feel lucky to be an intern here. Everyone here is young and energetic, and it is very cool to witness a mix of nonprofit and private sector work. I am learning a lot. I was interested in social entrepreneurship for a summer internship, so I contacted the Taylor Center at Tulane (the Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship minor program, even though I am not a SISE minor) and looked at their community partners. Propeller jumped out at me as an organization I would be interested in working for, so I contacted the Executive Director, Andrea, who ultimately put me into contact with the head of the Development department, Sydney, who interviewed me for the Development internship.

I would recommend being persistent when trying to get an internship! I had to email Andrea and Sydney a couple times before securing an interview. Now I understand why: they are both extremely busy trying to keep Propeller going. Sending a second email if you have not heard back is never a bad idea.

Another tip I have about securing an internship is to put something interesting that you have done on your resume. It is impressive and it stands out to interviewers. During my interview with Sydney, she asked me a lot about my involvement with student organizations. I was the chair of a TUCP committee, Tulane After Dark. She asked me a lot about that and seemed interested in all that went into running a committee. I cannot say for sure, but it may have helped me get the internship. I

think we talked about my involvement TAD for more than ten minutes. I talked about problem-solving, challenges we faced, the types of events I planned, budgeting, time management, etc. Luckily, it was an easy thing to talk about because I spent so much time on TAD this past year!

My first week was a pretty seamless transition. My boss, Sydney, sat down with me several times to check in and "on-board" me to the development team. John, an AmeriCorps Vista member on the Development team, also helped me get used to the Propeller systems. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming.

I'm learning a lot already about how a nonprofit works and social entrepreneurship in New Orleans. I am excited to learn more and contribute something meaningful to this awesome organization while I'm here. I have more specific learning objectives, such as drafting a grant myself, but my overarching goal is to be able to contribute to Propeller.