

Students for Education Reform: Massachusetts Week One

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As I boarded the plane home from New Orleans last week after my whirlwind internship training with all of Students for Education Reform's interns across the U.S., I felt simultaneously full of excitement for the summer ahead and also utterly overwhelmed by all that I have to learn to be an effective intern for this organization. And somehow, a week later as I head home from my first full day working with the rest of the SEFER Massachusetts intern team in Boston, I feel the same way, yet with an added sense of direction and energy (which could potentially be the caffeine talking). Before I delve into all of that, though, let me explain exactly

what I am doing this summer as a field intern for SFER.

Students for Education Reform is a national activist organization that aims to empower college students to become leaders on their campuses by advocating for educational equity across the U.S. At a national level, SFER accomplishes this by identifying campus leaders and providing them with the resources to start their own campus chapters and organize to create campaigns related to education issues in their area. There is a chapter of SFER at Tulane, however there have been some organizational issues in the past year that have led to a lack of mobility and community engagement by the chapter. This summer, I am working with SFER Massachusetts, which is a coalition of all the chapters in the state (most of which are located in Boston), to help them build capacity and presence in the Boston area through recruitment of new members and chapters, reaching out to community organizations, and creating partnerships with politicians and media to increase their engagement in those spheres. SFER MA worked on an amazing campaign to change a law related to English Language Learner education last semester; I will also be a part of the continuation of that campaign as they mobilize for next year. The work that I am doing with SFER MA is also intended to help me learn various recruitment, campaign, relationship-building, and public relations strategies so that I can help reinvigorate SFER Tulane next year and also help build an SFER Louisiana coalition.

Education reform is a fairly new passion of mine (and something that I hadn't really delved into until arriving in New Orleans), so it has been a little crazy learning all of the terms and trends going on in this sector and trying to develop my personal beliefs about what is most effective in education while being exposed to a whole new host of ideas about that particular topic. However, my engagement in the education reform community of New Orleans is what led me to this position. After divvying up the work that we (myself and three lovely interns from the SFER MA coalition) will be doing this summer, I have developed a better understanding of all that goes into campaign-building, leadership of a coalition, and community organizing, and I am excited to engage more deeply in all of those fields. Everyone that I have met through this internship so far has been incredibly energetic and passionate, which has inspired me to keep working toward educational equity both in Massachusetts and in New Orleans. I hope to develop a new set of skills related to advocacy and activism and also gain important experience in building the kind of community relationships that I would like to be able to build in New Orleans.

But first I need more caffeine and a map of the T.

Hannah Dean

P.S. If you want to learn more about SFER, its past work, and the personal narratives of its interns and members about why they are involved in education reform, visit the SFER Real Voices Blog: <http://realsfervoices.org/your-voices/>

And if you want to learn more about SFER MA's awesome ELL campaign, read this op-ed that they published along with several community leaders in the Boston Globe: <http://www.bostonglobe.com/2014/03/17/podium-ell/Dt0oPiol0gZqnEuBJDdn9N/story.html>