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GIP: Global Internship Program

FLOR INTP 3347

CAPA Florence

Final Internship Reflection

Working in a CAPA Florence internship at Flod and participating actively in the Global Internship Program course this semester has been a highly educational moment in my professional and academic development that was relevant to my future career goals and was engaging. Through these two connected programs, I have greatly improved my cultural intelligence quotient, C.Q., which refers to the understanding and successful navigation of cross-cultural situations. I have also acquired and improved upon a range of crucial professional and personal skills this semester.

There are several main skills that I am highlighting in this reflection. These skills are professional and public communication, knowledge of and successful use of social media to promote companies, advocating for myself, intrapersonal intelligence, which is also known as self-knowledge, a growth mindset, professionalism, self-confidence, and the understanding and successful navigation of office and industry dynamics.

In my internship, the two experiences that best show my improvement in these main skills and that stand out the most as being very instructional are the Italian-English translations that I performed for Visit Tuscany and Museo del Tessuto, the textile museum in Prato, and the social media posts that I wrote promoting wine-making companies, their wine products, and their featured food pairings. The two experiences in the Global Internship Program course that helped me the most to succeed in my internship and to obtain and reinforce vital skills are the Empowering Women in the Workplace masterclass and the mock interview assignment.

First, I will explain how the two listed experiences in my internship at Flod contributed to my professional and personal skill development. The first key internship experience is translation. The translations that I performed from Italian to English for Visit Tuscany, a government entity promoting regional tourism, and for Museo del Tessuto, the textile museum of Prato, required critical thinking, understanding of and navigation between cultures using C.Q., strong professional and public communication abilities, and robust foreign language capabilities.

For Visit Tuscany, I would need to confirm that I translated everything from the original Italian article closely and accurately, but I would also need to think critically and apply C.Q., communication, and language skills to confirm that I was translating in a way that would be clear even for non-native English speakers, have flow, and sound natural. I also needed to use these skills to preserve the colloquial and engaging writing style of the original Italian articles in order to appeal to the target market of English-speaking tourists. For the Museo del Tessuto, I needed to translate from Italian to English for posts for social media platforms that described various highlights of the museum’s exhibits.

These posts contained colorful, engaging, and colloquial language to appeal to potential museum visitors, and they used several idiomatic expressions and phrases that were difficult to render in English. ‘Chapeau,’ for example, is a French word for hat, but is used in Italian as an idiomatic expression roughly equivalent to ‘hats off’ or ‘I tip my hat to you,’ so in these posts, it needed to be translated as one of the following English idiom equivalents, not as a direct translation of the word itself. Another example of a phrase that required critical thinking, C.Q., language skills, and communication skills is ‘gioco di prestigio,’ which, if one were to literally translate into English, would become ‘game of prestige.’ However, the real meaning of ‘gioco di prestigio’ in Italian is much closer to the English expression ‘magic trick’ in the context of these posts.

The second key internship experience is the English-language writing that I produced for social media posts promoting winemakers. These posts would describe an Italian wine-making company, its history, and its unique mission. They would also feature one or two selected wine products from this company, and they would inform readers of ideal food pairings for these wines. These posts were an important aspect of my internship experience because they required me to use C.Q. in order to navigate the world of Italian wine-making and communicate the great pride and heritage of Italian wine-makers to English-speaking audiences. I also needed to use my professional and public communication abilities and my social media knowledge, and I needed to be adaptable and flexible, because this industry was new to me. The messages of every post needed to be tailored to be marketable to a target audience of food and wine industry critics and lovers of Italian wine. Therefore, I needed to use some of the vocabulary of a sommelier by referring to wines as ‘fresh,’ ‘full-bodied,’ or ‘elegant,’ defining their ‘aromas,’ and listing their ‘hints’ of various fruity or nutty natural flavors.

The first of two key experiences in the Global Internship Program course that most helped me succeed in my Flod internship was the masterclass on empowering women in the workplace. This masterclass actually had goals and lessons that should be applicable to both men and women. It confirmed how crucial it is to be able to advocate for yourself, to have self-confidence, to understand and successfully navigate office and industry dynamics, and to always be ready to apply C.Q. to maneuver properly in cross-cultural environments. This masterclass shows a panel of women who are leaders in their professional fields, entrepreneurs, and successful, self-motivated individuals. They each speak about their experiences as successful working women, and what they needed to do in order to build their careers even in industries that were often male-dominated. For example, one of the female leaders on the panel worked for a trade union, and she needed to show her colleagues that she could communicate in a strong, determined manner, and that she could influence the opinions of her political audience. She also needed to be diplomatic enough to communicate with people who held different opinions without starting an argument. Her success, along with her self-confidence and advocacy for herself, showed her male peers that she was capable of performing the necessary tasks.

The second key experience from the Global Internship Program class that enabled me to perform well in my internship at Flod was the mock interview assignment. This assignment taught me many highly useful professional and personal skills. I increased my self-knowledge, I improved my ability to constructively critique myself and learn from my mistakes, I learned to strive for excellence as opposed to perfection, I applied C.Q., and I developed a growth mindset to improve for the future. Through this mock interview, I recorded a video of myself answering interview questions, and then I went over the interview in class with the professor, discussing what I did well and what I could improve upon. We agreed that I communicated clearly throughout and answered all of the questions sufficiently. However, I noticed that I could have smiled more and paused less in this mock interview. The professor correctly noted that I could also have spoken more fluidly, because I communicated relatively slowly in the mock interview, as I worked to be clear to non-native English speakers. These are very helpful pieces of constructive feedback that I will apply to future interviews. This assignment is also quite helpful because interviews are very practical and common experiences that everyone has in the professional world. Performing well in an interview is crucial to obtaining gainful employment.

In conclusion, the two foundational experiences in my internship at Flod, translating for Visit Tuscany and Museo del Tessuto, and writing social media posts for wine-makers, and the two foundational experiences in the Global Internship Program course, watching and discussing the masterclass on women in the workplace, and performing and critiquing my own mock interview, were very educational. I have gained and improved upon the following skills through these programs, especially through the key experiences highlighted in this reflection: the cultural intelligence quotient, self-confidence, advocacy for myself, professional and public communication, social media knowledge and competence, Italian language capabilities, understanding and successful navigation of office and industry dynamics, critical thinking, and adaptability. These two programs as a whole are essential steps for building my future career, because they combine a classroom education in the many facets of professionalism and intercultural competence with the experiential learning that takes place during an engaging, rewarding internship at Flod.

The next steps for building my future career will include an internship over the summer in Paris, France to complement my experience this semester in Florence, Italy, and completing applications to teach English in Italy and France after graduating from the University of Pittsburgh in 2019. Throughout my course of studies at the University of Pittsburgh, my future internship in Paris, and my potential future position as a teaching assistant for the English language in Italy and France, I will apply the professional and personal skills and content and cultural knowledge that I have acquired this semester at Flod and in the CAPA Global Internship Program course.