

Premium internships provide opportunities for students, improvements for Purdue Catering & Events

In an effort to make Purdue Catering & Events more efficient and attract more student employees, Catering & Events has created two new internships that give students supervisory experience and professional development opportunities.

The human resources generalist position enables experienced student employees to improve processes involved in the hiring, training and retention of employees, as well as operational practices.

“There are always problems you see during events and things you can improve, but we haven’t had that person to look at it and be able to actually change something,” said Makenzie Leone, one of two students hired to the new HR generalist position this semester. “Now I’m actually able to help Catering, get more employees that we need, and also help keep them and make sure that the employees we do have know that they’re appreciated.”

Leone, a senior psychology major and management minor, and Dan Jin, a hospitality and tourism management graduate student, conduct hiring interviews, facilitate employee orientation, coordinate employee of the month programs, plan monthly training themes, and arrange workshops for employees on anything from resume creation to leadership development.

“The kind of stuff that shows our employees that we’re thinking about them outside of their work, trying to help them learn more things that aren’t just catering,” said Leone, who worked for two years in catering prior to this position. “I want to work in HR, and the only way to really get into it is through an internship. They asked me to apply for this job, which is really nice because I know this place really well. I do a lot of projects on things to improve, since I’ve been working here a while and I know things that need improvement.”

In addition to helping Catering & Events achieve its strategic objectives and planning development for student employees, the HR generalists participate in Passport to Professionalism, a series of workplace competency modules that help students hone professional skills like customer service or teamwork.

The fast-track student manager internship is one that targets students with prior relevant work experience, who can quickly assume supervisory roles by pairing with a manager when they start work. These students move through server, trainer and captain positions, reinforcing skills in communication, leadership, planning and delegating, and customer service.

“We created that position in an effort to draw in students that either have catering experience or are Hospitality & Tourism Management or Foods & Nutrition (Nutrition Science) majors, who have some investment in the business, so we can elevate to a higher skillset more quickly,” said Amanda Adams, director of catering.

The fast-track students complete true-to-life projects that managers regularly encounter in professional settings, like updating training materials, reviewing standard operating procedures, benchmarking competitors and synthesizing data. They develop project and time management skills, and they can even earn course credit for their work.

Adams hopes that offering students opportunities above entry level with professional development potential will attract higher quality and quantity student employees, benefitting her department and customers along the way.

“These two internships were created to meet our business needs, not specifically to be a part of student success, but they provide opportunities at a different level that will translate into students’ professional lives,” Adams said.

Writer: Matt Watson, watso101@purdue.edu

Source: Amanda Adams, amandaadams@purdue.edu