Due West Internship Journal

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June 16, 2015
I went to work for the first time today at Due West. My first day primarily consisted of translating marketing documents from English to Chinese, reading over some editor applications, and compiling a number of essays from students I worked in a previous internship. I’ve been told that I will be working with a student for a mock interview (she is interested in applying to Columbia ED.)
I talked to my supervisor today, and she asked me what I’d be interested in doing. I indicated that I would really like a work experience in which I am actively interacting with the students. There is a possibility of working with the students as a teaching assistant and organizing workshops.
Work is definitely a bit overwhelming to say the least. Not so much because of the duties and assignments, but more because of the number of people working in my workplace. I worked at an internship last summer, but it was at a very small company (maybe 2 secretaries, 4 teachers, and my boss.) I’m not sure if Due West would be considered a “big” company, but it is sure far larger than the previous company I worked at.
All in all, this should be an interesting experience to say the least.

June 17, 2015
I went to my first group meeting today. One of the speakers during the meeting gave a talk about how best to interact with the parents due to the large cultural gap between many American parents and Chinese parents. She stated that Chinese parents tend to be very protective of their children and will invest a great deal of time and money into their children. Therefore, parents do a great deal of research into potential college prep programs and resources and often have already spoken to past clients for a program. She also warned us that some Chinese kids do not fully understand their workload because the parents arrange everything.
I also did some editing for the Due West advertisements. It was interesting to see the way Due West emphasized their message in the ads.

June 18, 2015

I received the following email from one of my Due West coworkers. There is some “Due West” lingo that I do not fully understand. I will definitely keep my ears open and maybe ask Rosalyn, one of the counselors, to familiarize myself with the lingo:

**Pre-meeting rumblings about the website and when it’s going to be updated.**
Tim
- **Writing Center**
  - DWC assignments
    - We’ve started writing
    - Tim’s published protocol on how to assign. Ask him around AAA meeting for assignments.
    - Caveat: Everything will change in future. No more personal DWC, more of a FIFO stack (first in, first out) with some other
heuristics that take into account urgency and availability/willingness to contribute.

- Will Tran (new DWC w/ Pomona and Conn College background) will be new Peter Varnum. Probably be managing distribution, in office DWC. Coming in a month.
- Second counselor revision is now much more important in considering “sum of all parts” of essays.
  - Finding more editors/dwcs
    - Any and all writers can apply! Helps to have certain experience, but it comes down to if you can edit

- Summer Celebration

John
- Service
  - If kids are not applying to schools what impact are you having?
    - Increase intellectualism/critical thinking skills
    - What does it mean to go to America? (related to critical thought)
      - Consider future/options
    - Reflection/self awareness
    - Life skills
      - Punctuality
      - Communication
      - Independence – both in action and thought
    - Realistic expectations/cop ing with failure
    - They know they’re counselor is here/happy with outcome
  - How do we get a Russell?
    - Take an interest early on.
    - Brandon Chan/James example. James played basketball w/ Brandon. Talk about confidence. BFFs. How do we KNOW the student?
    - HOW CAN YOU BROADEN HORIZONS W/O U N D E R S TAN DING FOUNDATION?
      - #1 complaint is you don’t know my kid
      - All of this service stuff is a means to an end!
      - Need to get into a reach school AND bond w/ kid. Counseling is holistic process
      - Don’t ignore families… Give parent positive feedback, not just negative.
      - Ideo website!
      - Internship opportunities.
      - Off site visits: go see kids in their home environments
      - Attitude shift: our kids are humans and wanna hang out. Our kids are more than just who we see.
      - I should go karting with Michael Wu… would be pretty fun.
  - How do we make college list that will be realistic and leave kids feeling supported?
I also did the interview with one of the students, Tomoka. She was a really sweet and interesting girl with a passion for psychology. It was very fun talking to her about her interests and what she hoped to do with them inside and outside the classroom.

June 19, 2015
I wrote notes for the interview with Tomoka on what she did well and how she could improve. In my previous internship, I had a lot of one-on-one discussion sessions with the students, but I get the sense that in this company, the counselors have far more one-on-one discussions with the students than the interns do. As requested by Rosalyn, I sent Tomoka an email with my feedback. I hope she finds my feedback useful.
It’s definitely fascinating to see the group dynamics at Due West. With regards to cultural differences, I’ve noticed that the native Chinese employees tend to interact with each other far more than they do with the non-native Chinese employees. Likewise, the non-native Chinese employees tend to interact with each other far more than they do with the native Chinese employees. This is a pattern I’ve noticed inside and outside the office; even when the employees go grab lunch, I’ve noticed that the native Chinese employees are more likely to grab lunch with each other, while the non-native Chinese employees are more likely to grab lunch with each other. I think this may be because of the language barrier and cultural differences.

June 23, 2015
I sent an email to my supervisor, Charlotte, to propose a writing workshop idea that I have been thinking about for a while. In my past internship experience at Shu Ying, a college consulting company in Shanghai, I spent most of my time editing students’ college essays and holding brainstorming sessions to come up with more essay ideas. Based on the skills I’ve acquired from my past experiences, I think holding a writing workshop would be the most realistic project for me.
There was also a group meeting with Dean Valentini. We talked about how to better prepare Chinese kids for environment in American colleges by helping them overcome cultural differences. It was really funny to hear one of the counselors refer to some of the students’ parents as “Snowplow Parents”—parents who are so concerned with their students’ academic performance that they do anything they can to clear all obstacles, rather than letting the kids face the obstacles themselves. Chinese kids are often taught to think of grades and nothing else. Oftentimes, they are encouraged to think that there is only one right answer, and that’s whatever the teacher says. However, in sharp contrast to the Chinese school environment, American students are taught to think outside the box. To many American students, there are multiple right answers if one can find ways to support it (unless it’s math.)
I was asked to write a WeChat post for the Due West WeChat Platform about the meeting. After reading over some sample WeChat posts and writing a draft of the post on Microsoft Word, I showed it to my supervisor, Charlotte. It was really helpful
to hear her feedback on how I could improve my post and adjust it to fit the style of past WeChat posts. I will definitely keep her advice in mind if I make any future WeChat posts for the Due West WeChat Platform.

June 24, 2015
I was assigned my first major project today! One of my coworkers asked me to compile lists of past college supplemental questions for Due West’s Teamwork Dashboard. It was so interesting to see the different questions from a wide range of schools. Having working with students for a college consulting company last summer, I was already familiar with some of the college supplemental questions. A very popular college among some of my students from last year was University of Chicago, so I recognized those questions. Either way, the University of Chicago questions are unforgettable because they are always so quirky!
Anyways though, it was fascinating to see the other supplemental questions that other colleges came up with. For example, none of my past students applied to Elon University, so I haven’t heard about this school until I started working on this project. However, when I read over this school’s questions, I found myself wondering how I would tackle these questions because they seemed just as quirky as some of University of Chicago’s questions.
I definitely look forward to working on this project!

June 25, 2015
I just received another project to work on. For this second project, I am supposed to compile and translate student interviews on WeChat for marketing and promotional purposes. My coworker, Rosalyn, told me that a few months ago, the Due West counselors interviewed ten students about their experiences working with Due West. She gave me the contact information of a translation company to help me translate these interviews from English to Chinese. This is especially important from a marketing standpoint because the primary readers of these WeChat posts will be the students’ parents, who will have a better grasp of Chinese than English. Rosalyn also told me that I am to include a brief description of the college that each student was accepted to and an advertisement for the Due West ACT classes at the end of each interview post.
This project definitely seems challenging and a bit daunting. I’ve only ever used WeChat to talk to family and friends, so I’m not too familiar with how to use it as a social media and marketing platform. I know that Danny, another intern at Due West, has some experience with using WeChat as a social media and marketing platform. Rosalyn has suggested collaborating with Danny on this. Other counselors also have experience with using WeChat as a social media and marketing platform, so I can probably ask them for help, if needed.
Interestingly enough, this project and the project involving college supplemental questions don’t have any set deadlines. This is quite a contrast to what I’m used to at school because all my school assignments have set deadlines. I guess I’ll have to work to plan my time effectively so I can get both these projects done before I leave Due West.
June 30, 2015
I finished compiling the college supplemental questions for the Due West Teamwork Dashboard! I also started contacting the various counselors to ask them to help me get in touch with the students to ask for their approval with regards to releasing their interviews on WeChat. If there is one thing that working on these two projects at the same time has taught me, it is the importance of multi-tasking as I collaborate with multiple people. I’ve also learned the importance of patience with regards to working with some of the students. Some of the counselors have told me that two of the students are not responding to their emails regarding the interview posts. I’ve tried getting in contact with these students via email, but they never respond to my emails either. After discussing this problem with Rosalyn and Danny, we’ve collectively decided not to include these two students’ interviews in the WeChat posts.

July 5, 2015
I just contacted the translation company to ask for help in translating the student interviews from English to Chinese. After talking to the translator, I sent her the emails of the English versions of the interviews.

July 8, 2015
I just received the translated versions of the interviews. However, after I showed the translated versions to Danny, a native Chinese speaker, he said that the translated versions are filled with serious errors. Because I’m not a native speaker, it’ll be difficult for me to correct these errors on my own. After I discussed this problem with Rosalyn, she recommended that I talk to the other native Chinese speakers in the office to try to fix the errors. The main challenge now is trying to adjust to everyone’s schedules and find time when everyone is free as I collaborate with multiple people.

July 9, 2015
I was just assigned another project! In August, Due West is planning to host an upcoming National High School Debate League of China (NHSDLc) tournament. The resolution for the tournament is as follows: “Powerful countries have a responsibility to intervene militarily in foreign countries to stop crimes against humanity.” I’ve been asked to compile a number of relevant articles for the topic brief.

As someone who is personally passionate about raising genocide awareness, I find that this is a complicated question that I think about quite a bit. On one hand, I think that there should be a moral obligation to help prevent crimes against humanity in foreign countries. On the other hand, I know that from a realistic standpoint, countries often fail to intervene militarily in foreign countries when there is no possibility of political gain. Even when countries do intervene, it is often not for humanitarian reasons, but for political reasons.
July 15, 2013
These past few days have been so busy! I have not only been alternating between working on the Student Interview WeChat project and the NHSDL topic brief, but also been working on a few smaller projects that my supervisor has assigned me. Recently, Due West has been looking for editors to help edit the students’ college essays. Seven people have applied for this position. To apply, each candidate is given a sample essay to edit. I was asked to assess whether each editor would be a good fit for the position by writing evaluations on each potential editor’s strengths and weaknesses. Having worked as an editor and English teacher during my past internship at Shu Ying Academy in Shanghai, I found my past experiences extremely invaluable as I evaluated each candidate’s editing skills.

July 20, 2015
I finally submitted my NHSDL topic brief! The process of working on it was definitely a lot more demanding than I initially expected! At first, I thought this would be a relatively simple task; I didn’t think that compiling articles for a topic that I was personally very interested in would be too challenging. As it turns out, the most challenging part of the project wasn’t compiling the articles, but formatting the topic brief in a way that it looks professional. I struggled with keeping the line margins of the articles consistent; I’ve lost track of the number of times I had to readjust the margins. Over these last few days, I had a lot of back-and-forth meetings with my supervisor and other counselors, in which they all offered feedback on how to fix the formatting to make it look more professional. It was challenging, but I’m glad that I was able to use their feedback to improve.

July 21, 2015
Today, my supervisor told me that all the Due West interns are going to University of International Business and Economics this Thursday to help Due West set up for the China Youth Business League Tournament. My responsibilities at the tournament will include handing the high school students flyers about Due West services and encouraging them to join Due West China Youth Business League WeChat group to receive more information about Due West.

July 23, 2015
Today is the day of the China Youth Business League Tournament! This morning, I went to the University of International Business and Economics to help my Due West coworkers set up for the tournament. Of everything I had to do today, the most challenging part was figuring out how to get to the University of International Business and Economics, which is where the tournament was to take place! I looked this university up on Baidu the night before, glanced over the subway map, and took a picture of the address. I thought that this would be enough, but I was wrong. Upon exiting the subway station, I planned to ask around to ask where the university was because I figured it couldn’t be too far from the subway station. However, the people I asked gave me contradictory directions to the university. Thus, after about thirty minutes of wandering around the area, I ultimately found the university. Next time I try to find a place for the first time, I’ll study the Baidu map more closely in order to
get a better sense of the roads. Reading Chinese characters doesn’t always come easily for me, so it’s not always easy for me to know the road names. I may have to ask for Gracie’s help when it comes to identifying the road names, but I’m determined to get a better idea of how to navigate Beijing using Baidu. I also managed to recruit eleven high school students to the Due West China Youth Business League WeChat group. Talking to the students about Due West and learning more about their backgrounds was a very eye-opening experience. At first, I felt a bit uncertain about walking up to students I’ve never met before to encourage them to join the Due West China Youth Business League WeChat group. However, after observing how other counselors approached the students, I was able to effectively modify the way I approached the students as I strived to help them learn more about what Due West has to offer.

July 29, 2015
I finally finished compiling, translating, and organizing the 8 interviews for the Due West WeChat platform. After talking to some of my coworkers, we agreed to release the first interview on August 4. Each interview will be released on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, I will not be in Due West to see most of the interviews released. Still, I’m feeling an overwhelming sense of happiness, satisfaction, and relief that I finally managed to complete this project. It was extremely challenging and occasionally frustrating, but it’s done!

August 3, 2015
After some discussion with my supervisor and coworkers, I decided to change my initial hopes of holding a writing workshop to conducting mock interview sessions. Although I haven’t conducted student interviews for a while, I was told that the Due West Undergraduate Team has a pressing need for more people to conduct mock interviews because the Liberal Arts College Tour is coming up! Because many Due West students will be attending this tour and are planning to have interviews with college admissions officers, it is important that they get as much practice as possible.

Today, I conducted a Skype mock interview for a student named Katherine, who came across an extremely outgoing, likable, and sociable individual. Of all the students I’ve conducted interviews for in the past, she definitely seemed to be the strongest. Over the course of the interview, I got the sense that she would be the type of person that people just naturally gravitate toward.

I definitely look forward to interviewing more students in the days to come!

August 4, 2015
My first WeChat interview has finally been posted to the Due West WeChat platform! This project has definitely been challenging to say the least, but I’m so happy to see that these past few weeks of work have paid off! The afternoon was very stressful because my supervisor asked me to make some last-minute changes to the formatting of the Due West Debate Tournament Topic Brief. Because the Debate Tournament is this weekend, it was imperative that I get this done today so the Topic Brief can be printed on time. I stayed after work hours...
to get it done. It was extremely time-consuming, but I’m so happy and relieved I was able to finish it!

**August 5, 2015**

Today, I conducted a Skype mock interview for a student named Andy and an in-person interview for a student named Lai. Although both students seemed to be very hardworking individuals, it was evident that they need more practice in their interviews. When I wrote their evaluations to their respective counselors, I highlighted areas that needed improvement.

**August 6, 2015**

Today, I conducted a Skype mock interview for a student named Lourdes. It was very interesting to hear her talk about her aspirations to be a war photographer. Of all the students I’ve interviewed so far, she definitely seemed to be the most passionate about her field of interest!

**August 7, 2015**

Today was my last day at Due West. I already feel so used to coming to work everyday from Monday through Friday that it feels so strange knowing that I won’t be coming back to work on Monday. My coworkers threw a small good-bye party for me, which was really sweet. My supervisor bought two cakes that everyone shared in the kitchen. I’ll really miss everyone I’ve met.

Before I left the office today, I conducted one last mock interview with a student named Washington. After writing Washington’s evaluation, I said goodbye to my coworkers and left Due West. As I finished Washington’s interview, I was left with mixed feelings of happiness and nostalgia. Although I didn’t really interact with these students beyond conducting mock interviews, I still enjoyed seeing their unique personalities and trying to understand them as individuals. After all, as someone who hopes to go into the education field in the future, I truly believe that the best part of being a teacher is getting to know the students.

I think this internship experience has been a very rewarding one. Getting used to working in a company that was significantly larger than the last company I worked at was challenging at first, but I’ve grown to enjoy collaborating with a lot of people on a regular basis. Although my writing workshop idea was ultimately changed into a mock interview project, I am happy that I was able to work with my supervisor and coworkers to set realistic expectations and adjust the projects based on the company’s needs and my interests.

All in all, I’ll really miss working at Due West. I definitely plan to stay in contact with many of the people I met at Due West. I hope to build upon my experience in Due West as I continue pursuing my interests in the education field.