Intern Spotlight: Jason Ferkinhoff
Compiled by Ryan Lesch

Jason is a senior with a Psychology major and Management minor. He interned last year as a Counseling Intern at ROCORI High School, Cold Spring, MN.

How did you find out about the internship and what was the application process like?
My academic advisor knew that I was interested in pursuing a counseling career. He told me that he has had students intern with the Minnesota Workforce Center (located in St. Cloud). My advisor e-mailed me a link to get more details and an application for the internship. I submitted an application and contacted the Minnesota Workforce Center to set up an interview. The interview was fairly simple and straightforward, and they got back to me within a few weeks. Prior to the start of the internship, there was a meeting for all the Workforce Center counseling interns where we were provided with the basics of the job.

What were some of the internship highlights?
One part of my internship was working with a class of sophomore students. This was really fun and interesting. I did not think that I would have enjoyed being a teacher, but it was really rewarding. It was gratifying to see students grasp the certain aspects of the class. Another part that was really enjoyable was being able to work with the school counselors. I worked in a setting that I would like to be in for my career, so it was important to be able to get the full experience. I was able to sit through meetings, meet with students, work with standardized tests, and hear about everything that happens throughout the day. I think that some internships only show certain aspects of the job, but this internship showed me exactly what it is like to be a school counselor. This was extremely valuable to me.

What was a typical day like? What were some of your major responsibilities?
This was what made the job interesting to me. There was never a “typical day.” Each day had different responsibilities. Some of the tasks that were common for me were working with my class that I helped organize and teach, meeting with junior and senior students to talk about plans for college, and organizing standardized testing materials. These are just a couple of the duties that I performed over the course of the semester.

What were some of the challenges of your internship?
The first month of the internship was somewhat difficult for me. I had a difficult time knowing what I needed to do. In all the jobs I have had before, I was given specific directions and my managers made sure that I did everything correctly. This internship was very different from that. My supervisors gave me a lot of freedom and allowed me to structure my day however I needed to. They trusted that I knew what I was doing and gave me very little instruction because of that. It took a while to get used to this, but once I realized that they were not going to be looking over my shoulder, I started becoming more independent and gained a lot more pride in my work.

What did you learn?
I learned that I love this job. Before the internship started, I thought that school counseling would be a good fit for my personality, but now I know that this is something that I will enjoy as a career. I think that is one of the most important things for an intern to get out of their internship.

What advice would you give other students interested in internships?
Figure out what you want to do early. I applied for this internship in February and didn’t start the job until August. Talk to people about possible internships that would be helpful for your field of study and send in your application/resume as soon as possible. When you are at your internship, learn as much as you can about the specific aspects of the organization. I gained a lot of insight about the specific processes by simply asking questions and observing. Also, try new things. There were a few tasks in my internship that did not sound enjoyable to me, but I agreed to do them because I knew the experience would only benefit me in the end. By doing this, I learned what I did and did not like about the job.