

Professional in Environment Portfolio - Educational Milestones

Social Work Internship 481

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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SW 309: Community-Based Corrections

This course Community Based Correction was a turning point for me during my education at Eau Claire I came into the University undecided but have always thought about becoming a social worker when I was in high school. However, whenever I talked about going to college to be a social worker people kept on telling me to not go into that field you won't make enough money. However, for me it has never been about making the most money all I want in a career is to help others and better our society. I was getting this advice from family and friends to pick something else, so I took time to think and decided to go into college declared as undecided. I was then left contemplating between two majors Social Work and Human Resources in business my first two years of college.

By the fall of my sophomore year, I was able to take SW 309 Community Based Corrections, an elective this course brought a whole new perspective to my life. It got me thinking deeply that social work is the career that I want to go into. During this course, we did a simulation as if we were just released from prison. We only had a certain amount of money given to us and resources we had to figure out on our own at different stations. It was extremely difficult to get through the process, many of us were struggling to even have enough money for food. This was a super unique eye-opening experience that I did during this course, and I think everyone should have to go through some similar simulation as it gives you more empathy. It opened my mind up to have a greater understanding of what people must go through once being released from prison and how difficult it can be.

During this course, I could see myself grow into becoming more empathetic and open-minded. This course changed my thought process drastically I was about to declare a Human Resource major in business, but then I took this course. SW 309: Community Based Corrections,

fueled my passion to take the steps, and declare Social Work as my major. As I knew that I want a career where I can spend my life helping others, hopefully making some kind of difference in other people's lives. Whereas the courses I was taking for my business minor did not fall in alignment with my values like the social work field does. I could see a huge difference between the two fields. I knew then that the business world is not for me, whereas serving helping others is what pushed me towards the field of social work.

SW 290: Human Rights and Global Justice (Service Learning)

This class SW 290 was also a critical aspect in my education at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, it was a major milestone realizing that I have picked the correct major. This course taught me the value of human service in volunteering. It showed me how impactful volunteering can be for vulnerable populations. During this course, we talked a lot about human rights and how the rights of humans are being impacted negatively in some way every day. As well as how do we help solve these human rights and global justice issues that are detrimental to so many people. During this course, we were taught about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was written by the United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an important tool for social workers to abide by in order to value the dignity, rights, and respect for the people that we will be serving.

Implemented into this course were 30 hours of service learning to be completed by the end of the semester. The service-learning was to be completed at any of the local agencies within Eau Claire serving vulnerable populations. My professor told us to pick an agency to volunteer at that we didn't know a whole lot of information on and embrace the discomfort for some growth. After touring a couple of the agencies before reaching out to volunteer somewhere it became clear to me that I wanted to help serve people experiencing homelessness, as I didn't have much

prior knowledge of this population. So, I decided to complete my 30 hours at Positive Avenues which was a daytime resource center for people experiencing homelessness. This agency provided a safe place for people experiencing homelessness to go to throughout the day and was located underneath the community table that provides free meals every day.

Throughout my experience volunteering at Positive Avenues it became abundantly clear that people experiencing homelessness become homeless due to a variety of barriers that they face. The barriers are lack of affordable housing, mental or physical disabilities, incarceration, unaffordable health care, and or substance abuse. I learned this from having conversations with members at Positive Avenues about their own personal lived experiences. It was heartbreaking hearing their stories, but also opened up a whole new perspective for me on this population.

What I came to realize is that no one person has the same story, everyone has their own unique experience in life with many stories to tell. It also became clear to me that many people in our society do not understand how difficult it is for some experiencing homelessness to get out of the cycle of homelessness. Our society places all these stereotypes and stigmas against people experiencing homelessness that are not accurate. Overall, this course was beneficial for me becoming a social worker as it taught me the importance of volunteering and the value of human rights for all individuals. It pushed me out of my comfort zone to experience something I have not done before and for me to grow personally and professionally within the field of social work. As well as this course taught me to continue to volunteer and help serve/support the community that I am living in.

Psych 100: Introduction to Psychology

Reflecting on the courses that impacted my college education it appeared to me that the course, Introduction to Psychology got me excited into thinking about pursuing a career in social

work. Due to some personal reasons, I was super interested in this course to learn more about mental health and how the brain works/functions. There are a lot of mental health disabilities that run throughout my family, having lived experience with a close family member who has bipolar disorder it was a major challenge growing up. I never fully understood how drastically mental health could affect someone's daily aspects of living until I was able to take this course Psychology 100. I spent years of my life not communicating with this family member because I did not fully understand why they did what they did. After this course, I was stunned by how much I had learned and how utterly wrong I was for cutting off ties.

This course helped me work through some personal things in my life as well as helped me gain a greater understanding of mental health disabilities professionally. This course has been foundational in my education in becoming a social worker because it taught me that there are huge mental health gaps within our society that need to be addressed. It also contributed to my development as a social worker by knowing eventually in my career I want to work in the mental health setting as a counselor or work at a hospital. Therefore, I will need to continue my education further by getting my Master's in Social Work to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

The Professor for this course was so passionate and could tell how much he cared about the psychology of the brain. Shared his own personal experiences in class that brought in a whole new perspective. Furthermore, this course pushed me further to learn more about how the brain functions and mental health disabilities by doing some of my own research after the course was done. I am eternally grateful for this course as it helped push me in the right direction to the field of social work. As well as helped me repair relationships with family members. But most importantly helped me gain a greater understanding and dismantle my bias. As it is important in

the field of social work to see an individual as a whole person, a mental health disability does not define who they are.

Creating Milestone Events

Continuing development of education in social work is extremely important as I have learned throughout my courses during the social work program. As we have seen that our world is constantly changing. It is important to keep up to date on new laws, policies, and regulations that affect the people we will be serving. As well as it is important to continue enrolling in many different pieces of training for future development as the learning will never stop. There is always something new to be learned. There are many trainings I want to enroll in here are just a couple of examples of some training I want to enroll in, such as trauma-informed care, Narcan administration trainings, mental health training, etc.

Furthermore, to contribute to the ongoing development to create more milestone events in my future career as a social worker. I will take my professors advice from SW 290 Human Rights and Global Justice course to gain experience by volunteering with a population I had never previously served. This will be beneficial since it will push me out of my comfort zone into discomfort where there is more room for growth. As we have learned throughout this social work program that one of the greatest skills, we could have is having the ability to be comfortable with discomfort. A goal of mine is at some point in my life is to live abroad for a whole year and volunteer, this would absolutely bring me into discomfort. In order for change and growth, we must experience some discomfort. Moreover, the practice of being in discomfort teaches us to stay connected with ourselves, to be curious and open.

Moreover, I also plan on continuing my education to go back to school in a year or two after I graduate to get my Master's in social work. As I eventually want to learn more about

mental health and potentially work as a counselor, at a non-profit, in a school, or a hospital.

Overall, I am excited to put in the work to continue the endless learning and to continue to grow throughout my career in social work.