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STUDENTS GAIN RESEARCH EXPERIENCE PARTICIPATING IN STUDENT ASSESSMENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

April 7, 2021

By Kat Townsend

The Student Assessment Scholars Program is an internship course offered to Lindenwood University students. This course gives students the opportunity to participate in research in a way that gives them real-world experience. Kaitlyn Maxwell is the coordinator for the Student Assessment Scholars Program. She has students who truly recognize the value of what they learn in the program. She has stated that many students who participate are thankful for what this experience brings to their resume.

This program is typically a two-semester opportunity where student interns will be assigned to work with clients who are wanting to collect qualitative data for their own endeavors. During the first semester of this program, students participate in a training program with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This program is designed to equip students with the skills to effectively participate in research, including how to collect and analyze data. This portion of the internship counts as one credit and is meant to prepare students for the second portion of the program. Students also meet with their assigned clients to design personalized research studies to be used in the second half of the internship.

During the second half of the internship, students are in charge of interviewing clients and meeting with other students in focus groups. Student interns must then collect and analyze the data collected from these focus groups and present these findings to their clients. The data that is collected is typically used to see what areas a client may need improvement in and in which areas they are succeeding. An example from the Student Assessment Scholar's page included sample questions from University of Scranton who has conducted a similar program. Their questions included, "How can we improve our Residential Learning Community (RLC) offerings? Do the students who study abroad get the experiences that the study abroad office claims they are getting? Can we better understand student health and behaviors on campus?" By conducting these focus groups, clients are able to make improvements where they are needed, and student interns gain experience creating a program and conducting research.

From biology to psychology, statistics and economics, data analysis is useful in every field. In this case, clients obtain useful data from Lindenwood students. In turn, these student interns gain experience, confidence, critical skills, and job readiness while creating and conducting research through focus groups in a real-life setting. This program gives Lindenwood students a real opportunity to learn by doing. During this time, they not only build relationships and competence, but they also add to their resumes in a way that will stand out to potential employers.