

United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service

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Executive Summary

United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Services provided me the opportunity to develop very important skills that I will use throughout my career. As an intern at the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service I got further exposed on how our government strives to help people help the land. For example, Natural Resources Conservation Services provides technical assistance, easements, and financial assistance to farmers in order to help them have better wetlands.

Living my whole life in the Imperial Valley, it surprised me to learn about the great assistance for farmers. Farmers in the region need economic support but most importantly technical assistance to better their lands. The Department of USDA- Natural Resources Conservation services has planners that are experience and have a career on agriculture and soils which provide the great information to our farmers in the region. As an intern, I had the opportunity to attend District meetings, observed fields, observed lands getting restored and learn all the paperwork necessary for a farmer to apply for financial and technical assistance. Thanks to the efforts of USDA, farmers now have access to these services and the quality of their lands has improved.

I learned a lot from this internship experience. The office in Imperial has three departments that correspond to USDA which are Rural Development, Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service. I am very grateful because I had the opportunity to learn from each of the three departments. The experience was so gratifying because everyone was so welcoming until I finished my hours. My tasks as an intern included soil survey map planning, conservation implementation, outreach and communication to the public for NRCS,

conservation planning, research, economic assistance, information to landowners, tours, and demonstrations of land and Administrative functions.

I hope to one day be part of the United States Department of Agriculture and get to help farmers on our rural communities, especially from the town I live in. Most people from this valley find it difficult to have a home due to lack of money and the department of Rural Development provides financial assistance to low-income people. Each agency of the USDA benefits our community so I would like to take part on that. I always remember this great opportunity where I had the opportunity to enhance my career. Everyone from the office taught me something that I won't take for granted.

Project Objectives

When I began my internship, what I imagined I would be doing was simply helping customers with an application, in order to get funds for their project but as time progressed I learn more than I thought. I had the opportunity to attend district meetings, arranged and do field visits. It wasn't just a simple application that we had to work on. A lot of customer service was necessary which I really enjoyed because it's what I have experience on from my previous jobs. What required customers service was meeting with farmers and the application process. A lot of interaction and good communication skills were necessary. My original goal for this project was to learn how federal agencies work. As time progressed, during my internship, I not only wanted to learn about the environment but wanted to develop the necessary traits to become an excellent worker. I also learned that there was more to just simply working on an application but being able to communicate with the borrowers, being able to help them with the application process, and providing great customer service. I had the greatest role models to learn from, the specialist in USDA-NRCS.

Project Approach

The methods I took to achieve my goals and tasks were always being prepared and aware of what was happening. Every time I arrived to work I will communicate and I asked questions to gather the most information I could and do my assignments correctly. I was exposed to a lot of new information so I took notes and pay the most attention I could. Even though some of the subjects were not related to my career I found it very interesting. I even thought of obtaining an agronomy degree. I tried to be the most organized I could on every task assigned. I had to multi-task a lot which required a lot of organization. Sometimes I'll work on several applications at the same time; therefore I believed that being organized was a very important skill. Overall I really enjoyed this internship experience. I think it is very important during an internship to ask questions and especially communicate with colleagues when in doubt if you are doing a project. teamwork is also very important in order to have better results on projects. All the specialists I worked with were happy to answer my questions and help with my duties.

Project Outcomes

Being selected to intern for USDA- NRCS gave me very important skills that I can use throughout my career. During my internship, I had the opportunity to learn from all the applications necessary for farmers to apply for financial assistance. Some of the programs offered by NRCS are RCPP and EQIP. The RCPP is designed to improve water quality, reduce negative impacts to air quality, improve on-farm soil health and drought resistance and improve at risk species habitat on the Salton Sea. On the other hand, the EQIP program is a voluntary conservation program administered by NRCS that can provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that address natural concerns. The purpose of EQIP is to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; to optimize environmental benefits and to help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal and local environmental regulations. I learned how to fill and administer all the forms required for farmers to get assistance for their land. I also attended district meetings which allowed me to know what our community needs. This was really interesting for me because it's one of my fields of studies. I also made field visits where I learned how agronomy and the field business work. Most importantly, I had the opportunity to write two articles for NRCS. I wrote one article for California e-Flash Newsletter and for the Quechan Indian Tribe. Some of my colleagues helped me edit and it got published. I am honored to have been part of this project. I visited the site, took pictures and wrote the article about invasive plants that were preventing habitat development. I liked interning for NRCS because it helps not only the farmers but the people, and environment as a whole. Sometimes days went slow but I learned how to handle the pace in a field office. Overall, I learned that it is very important to have customer service and communication skills because when you work with clients you are giving them the first

impression of USDA. Interning for the United States Department of Agriculture was a wonderful experience that helped me grow professionally and has opened me other doors.

Conclusions

Being selected to intern for USDA-NRCS was a wonderful experience that taught me valuable skills and opened me doors as well. I am currently applying to jobs and I am certain that this internship will help me during the process. I grew professionally and it will make me more secure for my future jobs. My career goal is to benefit the public that is why I studied Public administration. I always wanted to work at a public agency where they benefit the public or people in a way. This way I can give back to the community with my degree. Some of the careers within the USDA that interested me is doing outreach for USDA or working for the Rural Development Department. I think outreach is very important because it's the way future generations will know how USDA, the environment or farming can improve. Rural Development also interested me because they provide low-income housing loans. All the careers I was exposed to in USDA-NRCS in Imperial CA interested me and I enjoyed learning from all of them. I want to continue my education by pursuing a Master's Degree in Urban Planning. My overall goal is to have a career where I know I am making a positive impact to our community and people's life.

Appendices



SDSU-IV Campus student selected for an internship within USDA-NRCS water and environmental Program

USDA-HSI & SDSU-IV Campus Partnerships

Rebecca Sanchez, majoring in Public Administration, was selected for an internship within USDA-NRCS Water and Environmental Program in the rural area of the Imperial Valley, California. The experiential learning experience in natural resource management, environmental science, and water-related conservation was made available via the CSU system Water Resources and Policy Initiatives in conjunction with the water Resources Institute through the Water Resources Experiential Learning for USDA careers, a funded project by the USDA NIFA-HSIs Education Grants Program NIFA- HSIs.

