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Waste Management Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Recycle Corp Intern

Organization Worked For: Waste Management (WM)

Student Name: Shaunak Roy

Internship Dates: 6/17/24 8/19/24

Faculty Advisor Name Steven Hollenhurst

Department UEPP



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STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

Shaunak Roy

DATE: 8/23/24 _____

I. Introduction

Working an internship at Waste Management has been an incredible journey this summer. From learning hands on skills and more about the solid waste division, to meeting all kinds of people who come from various backgrounds, Waste Management has taught me a lot. One might wonder how one of the largest Solid Waste Division haulers in North America can offer so much to learn and how one would choose to do an internship there. Earlier this year when the search for internships came, it was hard finding something that would fit the needs of my education

background along with my workstyle. I was looking for an internship that would have a balance of both desk work and doing something in the field. I came across the Waste Management Recycling Corps position for the Summer of 2024 and thought it would be an area, which I can apply Urban Sustainability too along with being an internship that stands out from many other ones out there.

II. Description of Duties

When I got the news that I got the internship I was very excited to work and was intrigued to see that I would be working in a place that I could learn a lot of

valuable skills. The first week of the internship came where we would learn everything in one week. For the first day we were told that are focus of this internship was community outreach and working with Waste Management customers. Some of the tasks we would be doing would be waste audits (checking businesses trash and recycling) as well as working community tabling events all in which had an end goal of getting people to recycle more and think about what goes in the trash. Information was a lot to handle at first with knowing all the facts along with guiding people to the right resources of where to go. Finding myself struggling to retain everything I thought to myself what

I would if this was a real-life scenario. I talked with my supervisor and was told that whenever you were unclear about something, to always ask questions and that it is okay to not remember everything. When I was given this piece of advice, I was able to feel a lot more at ease and learned that in any job it is okay to ask questions to clarify as well as admit that you don't know something off the top of your head. From there we were out in the field putting what we learned to the test. Our typical day started at around 8:00 in the morning when we got briefed on our assignments usually where we would get a list of all the businesses in the area that we were supposed to go visit. A lot of

these businesses that we were visiting were ones that had problems with trash like contamination or overflowing dumpsters, so it was our job to report back to Waste Management on what we had seen. We would check the businesses dumpsters and record all our observation from what we saw in excel. These observations would be things like if the business had too much cardboard in their trash which they should be throwing away in their garbage, or if they had open garbage lids which can cause contamination when rain gets in. From there we would talk with the business owners, and asked if they had any questions as well as saying what we observed with the hopes of

getting them to change their ways and promote sustainable practices. Aside from working with business owners we did a lot of work with multifamily properties who were Waste Management customers. Multifamily properties always have issues with garbage and recycling, whether it has to do with accessibility or education of residents. When we worked with multifamily properties we would usually pass out resources to residents to show how they could start brushing up on their recycling habits. Aside from doing physical work a part of our job was also interacting with the public in a friendly manner, one of which would be setting up educational booths at city

events like fair and farmers markets with games and prizes for kids to play along with answering any questions that the public had like what could be thrown away or how to get In touch with resources.

Even though many of these tasks seemed easy they came with challenges like having to drive around from one part of the city to the other or working for hours in the hot sun. With these challenges it sometimes caused me to slip up and make mistakes, but instead of looking down on myself I learned more and more each day and corrected myself when mistakes were made which allowed to practice good habits.

III. Outcomes/goals accomplished

When I did a variety of these tasks, it prepared me for the real world and gave me a feel of what it's like to work a real 9 – 5 job. It taught me to not be rattled as well since we did a variety of things and were constantly jumping around, which is important in the real world because you never know what you will expect. My internship had also made me a better person, teaching me discipline and learning ways I can improve my health like going to bed early or following a diet all with an end goal of making sure I can function while working.

With the Traveling/working with various community members in the Puget Sound Area everywhere in locations like Bremerton WA to the Chinatown area of Seattle, I got exposure to the way people live and how they do things. I related to this to my Urban Sustainability degree because I knew that in the future I would be working with people from various sorts of backgrounds and because of that, it's important to be patient and have empathy with people from all sorts of backgrounds. Another way I was able to relate my field work to Urban sustainability was the practice and message that we had. Lot of the site visits we went too

were of customers who didn't have the greatest solid waste division habits. Rather than trying to hound them about their habits and be strict with we took the approach of working with them and looking at things from a more positive manner. Because of this approach more people were open to changing their habits and being onboard to listening, which is something I would try to practice if I ever worked in any job whether it's in the Urban Sustainability field or not.

Aside from learning valuable skills, something I will always cherish from this experience were the amazing

people I met along with the key moments where I made a difference. With all the communities we visited along with many different businesses I was able to meet a variety of people who had all sorts of different backgrounds and was able to hear their story of how they got to where they were, along with sharing laughs and bonding with them. A key moment that I felt proud of myself, was when I was working a tabling booth during a community fair. We had a game where a little girl spun a wheel and whatever it landed on, she had to tell me if it goes in the garbage or recycling. The little girl had some trouble understanding as she spoke Spanish but not English. I immediately thought

about what I could do to help her and noticed that we had a recycling guide in Spanish. I handed it to her and pointed at the guide to indicate that it was there to help her. She immediately looked at the guide and was able to get the answer correct with her parents standing by her and smiling. I felt proud of that moment knowing that I was able to be inclusive and help someone.

IV. Assessment and reflection

As my time at Waste Management was coming to an end, I reflected on everything, from the amazing people I met to the Goals I accomplished. It was

amazing to see how far I had come along with all the work that me and the other interns did. As I start school again in the Fall, I will take the lesson that I learned with me and apply them to my life like talking with my professors and asking questions when I feel confused or maybe taking positive approaches to situations when things aren't going the way they are supposed to. Good practices are just one thing I will take away from this internship but there is one takeaway I have which is way bigger. At the end of the day there are so many internships which are out there, that may offer a lot of different opportunities. What I learned is that it's not the type of work that you do

which you learn from, but rather the experiences and people you interact with which is where you learn from.











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