Professional Development Plan

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The Penn State University HIED 801 Foundations of Institutional Research

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Dr. Terenzini has suggested that technical/analytical, issues, and contextual intelligences are vital for an institutional research professional. I am currently a chemistry and biology teacher to Chinese high school students who speak English as a second language. Many skills teachers practice can be applied to life outside of the classroom. For example, I believe that the scientific method can be utilized to solve any problem one may encounter and that no concept is too complex to explain if the presenter is prepared. However, I am lacking in technical, issues, and contextual intelligences that are specific to higher education. Through completing Penn State’s HIED Master’s, engaging in interviews and mentorships with professionals, and keeping up with current news through online chronicles, I hope to learn the professional skills necessary to be successful.

Having a scientific educational background, I feel comfortable in my ability to approach a question, form a hypothesis of how to solve the problem, gather evidence or data, and analyze the results of these efforts. I also feel confident in my ability to communicate a problem, a process and results in an intelligible way. Teaching chemistry and biology to second language high school students is simply not effective without the ability to illustrate complex ideas through clear presentations. Finally, I believe I am proficient in approaching an issue or project while keeping the big picture in mind. All of these skills will be an asset as I pursue Institutional Research.

As a second semester Higher Education (HIED) Master’s student, I feel I am most lacking in issues intelligence. I am still fairly unfamiliar with "the formal and informal processes that shape decisions within higher education" as our lesson states. While lacking in this understanding, I already utilize analytical skills to evaluate daily challenges within the high school where I teach. This often includes evaluating the rules and processes that must be followed, reporting to key-decision makers, and keeping the school's history and goals in mind. I believe that once I complete the courses within Penn State's HIED Master’s program, I will be able to apply the skills I already possess to the framework of a higher education institution. HIED 545 is already introducing many historical ideas and presenting opportunities to identify and acknowledge the significance of key events within Higher Education's development. HIED 808 introduced me to the Chronical of Higher Education and InsideHigherEd.com which have both been valuable resources in beginning to understand the current issues and successes that higher education has been experiencing.

The institutional research certificate is an opportunity I am truly considering. Following the completion of this course, I will make the decision to pursue this certificate and take some statistics classes as electives or move away from institutional research and put more focus on global issues and international education. The independent learning opportunities suggested through Coursera or AIR’s Data and Decisions Academy are also great resources to use. The foundational knowledge of applied statistics and regression models will undoubtedly be invaluable technical intelligence to any institutional researcher.

Dr. Goldstein provided an opportunity in HIED 808 to conduct an interview with a higher education professional within a field of interest. Through this assignment, I learned how to conduct an interview and gather contextual intelligence. I believe this type of intelligence will be one of the hardest to acquire because establishing a relationship with a mentor within your field takes time and trust. No professional wants to invest personal time and energy into an employee that may not have longevity in the company. Hopefully through networking with students or faculty within in the HIED program, finding internships or entry level jobs within higher education, and conducting more interviews with current professionals I will be able to gain contextual intelligence.

References

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