

Cecilia Fang
MEJO332 Public Relations Writing
November 20th, 2020
Professor Carter

3 Bluebirds Farm Reflection Essay

Service-learning has always been a part of my academic career since I first began volunteering in middle school. Volunteer work gives individuals the ability to learn and directly impact your community and I believe the work my team and I completed did exactly that. While most volunteer opportunities is distilled down to infrequent, one-time visits to a local organization, taking an integrated service-learning course this semester with 3 Bluebirds Farm really allowed us to see, understand, and even represent the voice of a non-profit from their point of view.

More than anything, I'm grateful for the chance to not only hone my own interpersonal skills, but to be given the chance to experience working with a non-profit. Having the hands-on opportunity to work with a brand new client, with a new team in an entirely unknown virtual territory pushed each of us to learn and adapt, and I believe that I came out of this course with more confidence in my own skills and ability to learn. Furthermore, having complete ownership over our work with our clients taught me how I can best be a PR professional that communicates consistently and clearly, and how I would change or grow my processes from this experience for the future. I believe all the new writing tools I've learned in class will also deeply impact how I communicate in the future of my career as each task not only taught me new ways of public relations writing, but how engrained these writing skills can be applicable in the workplace.

With the virtual nature of this course this semester, the biggest challenge was definitely communication. From the start as we got to know 3 Bluebirds Farm, Erin, and Andrea there were times where ideas and progress felt lost in-between emails which impacted the speed at which we could deliver what we wanted. This however, taught my team and I a lesson in transparency and through communicating the challenge of balancing the schoolwork expected from us in this course, as well as our other classes, it was easier for us to communicate with Erin and Andrea regarding realistic expectations of what could be completed this semester. I truly believe that was an invaluable example of how ownership and bias for action is a necessity when it comes to building projects from scratch, and is a lesson applicable to all aspects of our career and life.

I am also very thankful the communication within our team was strong and we were able to meet weekly to make sure we could work together and provide our clients what they needed. Every time we had a scheduled meeting with our client, our team always made the extra effort to have met at least once that week prior to the call, and also met 30 minutes early to recap, set a meeting agenda, and discuss next steps. With the virtual nature of how coursework had to be executed this semester, I truly applaud my groupmates for keeping up our vigor to produce quality content, despite the occasional communication challenges, and finding new ways to move continue our project.

After working with 3 Bluebirds Farm this semester, the main recommendation I would offer is finding a consistent voice. One of this biggest challenges our team faced was the differing opinions Erin and Andrea had in regards to what they wanted in a press release and donor letter. In turn, it was confusing at times for us to understand what was expected of us and what messaging to target as we were creating our pieces. 3 Bluebirds Farm does such impactful

work that it was even hard for us at times to cut things down, but I believe that if 3 Bluebirds Farm is able to keep their donor letters, social media posts, and newsletter consistent, it will be easier for them to talk about their big ideas in various ways rather than expecting all their stories to be condensed into one piece. Frequency also increase interaction and impressions on social media, which is all the more vital as everything this year has become reliant on the internet, and after working with the farm this semester I know they have so many amazing stories and perspectives to create the messaging they need.

The staff at the farm are also very busy, especially during this pandemic, but a recommendation I would include is timeliness. There were a few instances in which Andrea would contact us asking for updates, when we were actually waiting for her to send over pieces of information promised from a previous meeting that we needed to include in our press release, and often our requests for scheduling meetings were ignored or took upwards a week for a response. As such, for the future, a note about persistence and quick turnarounds could be included when working with this client to ensure students in the future know that communicating will require repetition and effort in order to get projects completed.

In all, I really did enjoy working with 3 Bluebirds Farm this semester and am really proud of our team for all we accomplished, despite the unusual nature of this semester and the challenges that come with virtual learning. The staff at 3 Bluebirds Farm work tirelessly to provide their needed services to the communities despite the obstacles, especially this year, and continue persevering for their kids and I think that's a true testament to not only the cause, but the kids involved as well. I hope to one day physically visit the farm, especially after writing and learning so much about how they have grown and all their bluebirds have done, and hope to see what other ways down the road I can contribute again.