

When Brad Brown, a business major, interned at Dick Taylor Chocolates in Eureka, he got his first real experience in the world of business. And with his goal of either starting or managing a small business after graduation, the experience fit right into his life's playbook.

The Community Internship Program

Brad applied for the community internship on the advice of his academic advisor in the School of Business. The opportunity included a paid stipend from the Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation, a local philanthropic foundation.

"Students have interned in many different organizations and businesses in and out of Humboldt County since 2012, when the business internship program started," said Denise Vanden Bos, Director of Project Development at the College of Professional Studies. "At first we offered the internship class only in the Spring Semester. But the program has been so well received by local businesses and students that we are offering a class in the Fall as well. ."

Student interns like Brad are matched with a business based on the projects requested and the student's own interests and studies. Brad went over his choices with the Faculty Internship Coordinator, who helped him narrow them down. The choices included Dick Taylor Chocolates, a business that was established in 2010. It was an opportunity to learn about small business startups.

"I have the dream of starting or managing a small business," said Brad of his choice to work at Dick Taylor, "and besides, I love good food."

The Work

Dick Taylor Chocolates was founded by Adam Dick and Dustin Taylor, two furniture and wood boat makers who turned their talents into making hand crafted, small batch chocolate. They had identified two large projects for Brad to work on during his internship: creating an employee handbook and analyzing their shipping costs.

Developing the employee handbook gave Brad a chance to use what he learned in Business Law class. He researched employee handbooks online and created a draft for the owners to critique. Eventually, employees themselves were asked to give feedback before the final product was delivered.

His second big project was analyzing shipping costs. Brad soon learned that the business was primarily using UPS to ship their goods, and that they were charging standard UPS rates. His analysis included a recommendation to connect the UPS link to their Quickbooks program. This innovative idea improved efficiency in the shipping process.

Reflections

When asked how the internship helped his career, Brad replied, “It gave me a good reference and helped me hone a different skill set than the classroom requires. The internship closes the loop between work and school. You get to see what’s really going on.”

Working on projects that made a difference to the business was intimidating at first, but Brad quickly learned that he could be successful if he engaged his talents and kept an open mind. That realization, and the honorarium from the Smullin Foundation, made the work feel “like a real job.”

He recommends the program, and has some advice for other Business majors who may apply. “Keep an open mind,” he said. “But set a schedule and routine, like you would as if you were going to class. Be willing to step up and do different things in order to learn.”

Currently working on his MBA at Humboldt, Brad is preparing for another internship as a graduate student. His wife Tiara, who serves as a member of the Fortuna City Council and the Mel and Grace McLean Foundation Board, saw the benefit of the program directly and helped to develop interest in providing internships in the Fortuna and Eel River Valley from the McLean Foundation.

“The internship helps ease you into the real world,” said Brad. “It’s a win-win for students to get to learn and experience something and get paid.”