

Program Analysis: Evaluation of Internship Preparation

My academic preparation through Auburn University's Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies program provided a strong foundation for my internship with the Community Engagement team at RxBenefits. Courses focused on nonprofit organizations, community engagement, and grantmaking were particularly helpful, as they introduced me to key concepts like partnership development, needs assessments, and impact reporting—skills I applied directly in my role. For example, one of the assignments in my coursework required creating an outreach plan for a community initiative, which mirrored my work assisting in outreach efforts and community partnership strategies during my internship.

Assignments that required critical thinking, such as evaluating nonprofit case studies or analyzing community needs, were especially beneficial. These tasks helped me think strategically about how an organization can make a tangible impact and align those efforts with a broader mission—an approach I continued to use while contributing to the Community Engagement team's projects.

However, there were areas where additional knowledge would have improved my preparation. I found that while I was well-versed in nonprofit operations, I could have benefited from a deeper understanding of how corporate philanthropy works, especially how companies integrate community engagement into their overall business strategy. I also felt underprepared when it came to professional communication, particularly in drafting stakeholder communications and internal reports. These were essential tasks in my role, and more training in business writing and formal communication would have made those responsibilities smoother.

Looking back, I would have benefited from taking a course specifically on corporate social responsibility (CSR) or strategic communications. A better grasp of how companies structure their giving and engage with communities from a corporate perspective would have helped me navigate the landscape of the Community Engagement team at RxBenefits more effectively. Additionally, I believe the curriculum could be strengthened by providing more hands-on, experiential learning opportunities, where students can work on real community engagement projects within corporate environments.

Overall, my academic experiences gave me a solid foundation for my internship at RxBenefits, particularly in terms of understanding nonprofit principles and community engagement strategies. With a few enhancements to the curriculum, particularly in the areas of corporate philanthropy, CSR, and professional communication, future students could be even better prepared for roles like the one I experienced.