

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE: CAMPAIGN INTERN

Ohio Citizen Action



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Ohio Citizen Action is a nonpartisan, grassroots mobilization group, which focuses on local environmental and social issues. During my internship, I worked in the community outreach department as a Campaign Intern, organizing and educating community members on a consumer rights campaign. The campaign running during my time with the organization focused on getting First Energy's coal plant bailout request denied. Ohio is the third largest contributor of toxic air pollution in the nation, mostly due to all of its outdated coal plants. These coal plants are so inefficient that they are no longer profitable, so First Energy has proposed a bailout to the PUCO, which would essentially raise consumer rates for the next 15 years, and use the profits to keep these dirty, outdated plants running and polluting. I was responsible for canvassing communities around the Cleveland area to raise campaign funds, collect letters, and have citizens make phone calls to fight this bailout. I also completed fiscal duties each night, and was required to brief the staff on a public health issue of my choice [trans fats].

KEY COMPETENCIES

- **Summarize issues of social inequality and environmental justice;** achieved through learning about the campaign at hand and past accomplishments of the organization
- **Discuss various approaches/strategies for identification, response and intervention to address and attempt to resolve common public health issues;** achieved through executing grassroots movement methods, acting as both a response and intervention, addressing and attempting to resolve the campaign issue at hand
- **Develop quantitative awareness of the multiple-scale, and multiple interactions that characterize public health problems;** achieved through several briefings from other staff members about issues that affect public and environmental safety and health. Issues included the LGBTQ community, plastic microbeads, the War on Drugs, trans fats, and animal agriculture.

TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

I developed an immense amount of transferrable skills during my capstone internship at Ohio Citizen Action. Through holding a position as a Campaign Intern, I gained valuable canvassing, organizing, and even soliciting skills. During my 10 day training session with the organization, I was able to learn about how to successfully canvass and organize all types of communities and people of all types of socioeconomic statuses, backgrounds, ages, etc. Training, in combination with being out in the field every single day during my time at OCA only worked to further advance these skills, as I received a great amount of real life experience practicing and applying them. I also developed outstanding communication skills, as that is essentially the main function of both the job, and the organization as a whole.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Through this experience, I have learned that I have phenomenal communication skills. While talking to, on average, over 150 people each week, I found myself able to speak with people of all ages, backgrounds, and statuses with ease. Not only that, but I was able to repeatedly create authentic relationships throughout each night, tailored to each individual person that I came into contact with. This greatly contributed to my success at Ohio Citizen Action, as effectively talking to people in the community was what I was hired to do.

Through this experience, I have also learned that environmental public health is not the field that I want to go into after graduation. While I care a great deal about environmental health and preservation, interning at Ohio Citizen Action only reaffirmed how truly passionate I am about food policy rather than environmental policy.

MY FUTURE

After graduation, I plan to look for a job that deals with some type of food policy, whether that is agriculture policy, animal agriculture policy, or anything else related to foodstuff regulation in the United States. My plans for the future reflect the many insights that I gained from my capstone internship at Ohio Citizen Action, as I now have a better understanding of how lobbying for policy change is completed. Additionally, I have seen first hand how successful grassroots movements can be in order to initiate a desired change. It is likely that the same campaign methods used by Ohio Citizen Action to confront environmental and social problems can be mirrored almost exactly in the world of food policy.

Additionally, if someday I find myself working for a nonpartisan, non-profit organization, I will have a much greater understanding on how these types of groups are run and maintained, as well as how they achieve success within their campaigns.