

Over the course of this semester, I participated in the APPLES service-learning program at UNC-Chapel Hill. I took part in this program as part of my public relations writing course. I worked with an organization named SCORE.

I believe that this experience has immensely helped me to prepare for the real world. It was a unique opportunity to write PR pieces for an actual company. In many writing classes, professors make up scenarios that you have to write about. This was not the case for the APPLES service-learning program. I was able to spend an entire semester researching and writing for one company. It helped simulate what working as a PR professional at a company would be like. The program also helped me gauge how much I would want to work as a PR professional and see what types of PR pieces I liked writing most.

The most valuable part of this experience has been interacting with SCORE. This experience has been the first time that I was responsible for interacting with a company on my own. It taught me professionalism and how to interact with people better. I believe learning how to do this is a valuable skill I can use after I graduate.

Working with such a well-established organization was the most difficult part of this experience. SCORE is a nationally recognized organization that just last year helped 45,027 businesses. Therefore, it was sometimes hard to write for SCORE and connect with the organization's workers. It made the work I was doing this semester feel less meaningful at times because I knew SCORE had a well-established PR team.

I believe the least valuable part of the APPLES service-learning program for our particular group was applying for the APPLES' grant. Overall, the application was easy, however, we had no use for the grant. SCORE is such a large organization and all of its operations were online this semester. Therefore, we did not help organize any events for which the funds could be used. We also did not need any transportation costs because it was all online.

Regarding this client, I would not recommend them to be used again for this program. Little, if any, of the work I or my group members performed will be used by SCORE. Although they have a local location, SCORE is a nationwide and well-established organization. I recommend that APPLES only use truly local non-profit organizations that are much smaller. I think this would allow the student's work to be more meaningful and there would be a higher chance these organizations would use it. Additionally, I think smaller and local nonprofits would benefit from the student's help throughout the semester.

SCORE also strictly limits the number of student volunteers they use. After speaking with the SCORE representative this semester, I discovered that in Chapel Hill they only use a handful of student volunteers to assist with a few areas of the organization. The organization mostly requires volunteers to be business professionals with decades of experience. Therefore, even if SCORE's operations had been in-person our group most likely would not have been able to do any hands-on community service. The other organizations that my fellow peers worked with seemed much more hands-on.

After a semester of working with SCORE, there are some recommendations I would offer. I think the most important thing SCORE should work on is their social media. SCORE's social media is greatly lacking compared to many newer and younger companies. If their social media was updated and more engaging, I believe they would attract more potential clients.

Another area in SCORE's PR efforts that could be improved is their website. The website has a ton of information on it that makes the website extremely overwhelming and could easily turn off potential clients. I also think it would benefit SCORE to add their monthly newsletters to

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their website in addition to being allowed to sign-up for their email list. By doing this, more people would have immediate information about SCORE's monthly plans.