



October 26, 2017

## What We Learn from Interns

There is as Latin proverb, *docendo discimus* – by teaching, we learn. Even if it's not an intended outcome, spending time reflecting on a teaching or training experience is sure to surface valuable lessons learned. There is also knowledge to be gained by listening to the students. The Foundation discovered this to be true with its summer internship program that started in 2011. Over the past seven years, the interns have taught us to be better teachers, better listeners and the importance of feeling valued.

Our interns have ranged in age and life experiences from fresh out of high school to completing a Master's degree. Each brought their own strengths and challenges. By recognizing this, we were able to assign projects that could play to their strengths while also challenging them to go out of their comfort zone. One of our younger interns, shy and reserved, was looking forward to delving into research and writing. While there was some research and writing projects for her, she was also offered a challenge to expand her experience. She ended up helping with a presentation at the Hawai'i Conservation Conference and noted it as the highlight of her internship.

At the end of each summer, an exit interview is conducted with the intern to learn what they liked the most and the least, their perception of the office and staff, and their overall satisfaction with the internship experience. It may sound mundane, but important insights are garnered from these conversations. We listen and use the information to tweak the program where appropriate and hopefully enhance the experience for the next intern. One intern commented on not liking all the reading that was assigned. As we reflected on it, we realized that even though the reading assignments were an important part of the learning experience, we could assign less, make it more more targeted and give better context as to its importance. We haven't had a complaint since.



Megan Kaleipumehana Cabral

This year's summer intern was a repeat from last year. If you haven't had a chance to [read Megan's blog](#) on her second summer experience, you can do so [here](#). One of her projects was to organize an intern alumni luncheon to which four of our [previous six interns](#) were able to attend. In addition to Megan Cabral, Nick Kido, Chloe Fonacier, and Amanda Hawkins (fka Kamakea) took time out of their busy days, including taking vacation time, to join us for food and fellowship. Since time had passed and they were all moving along with their professional lives, we asked them to reflect again on their experience as a summer intern.

We were humbled as each of them expressed how they personally benefitted from the experience. They gained unique hands-on experiences; networked and made professional connections that continue to help them today; learned about philanthropy and the work of our partners; and gained experience working in a professional office. But what was most touching is that they each said, by receiving our invitation to have lunch and talk story, they felt valued. Talk about an eye-opener. Of course we value our interns, but this was a reminder that small gestures can make a big impact.



Summer Intern Luncheon (08/10/17)  
Nick ('11), Chloe ('14), Amanda ('15) &  
Megan ('16 &'17)

*Docendo discimus* – by teaching, we learn—and we thank our summer interns for sharing themselves with us and allowing us to learn from them. They taught us how to be good teachers by allowing us to celebrate their strengths and challenge their comfort zones. We learned that by listening to their concerns we could improve the experience for others. Most importantly, we learned that no matter how busy life gets, you should invite a few interns to lunch and remind them how valuable they are.



Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anela Shimizu".

**Anela Shimizu**  
Operations Manager