

February 10, 2014

Dietetic Internship

Dear Sir or Madam:

I write highly recommending Joanna Wirkus to any graduate work she desires to pursue. She possesses many qualities that will make her an excellent health care professional.

I met Joanna when she applied for one of my Nutrition Education Coordinator positions in Spring of 2013. Actually, I had *heard* of her before. I maintain a list of students who contact me for opportunities. There are way more students than opportunities. I had emailed the list with an opportunity to help with a 'Direct from the Farm' cooking class that Dining Services was presenting in conjunction with the Student Health and Counseling Services dietitian. Joanna was one of two who responded they'd like to volunteer so I signed them both up to help – set up, service of samples, etc. I did not attend the class, but heard that it went well. About a month later, another class was approaching and the dietitian asked if I could provide volunteers to assist again; I indicated I'd send out another note and she said "oh, can you get that *same one* that helped last time, she was amazing!" Students vary in their initiative while supporting events like this; Ryann told me she wanted 'the one who knew so much about the food and health relationship and participated in the conversation' [versus being a passive helper]. I found out from a member of my staff that did attend the event that this was Joanna. This initiative and level of engagement is what you want in students who are part of your program.

I had also heard of Joanna from my Sustainability Manager when she told me about a new group that had formed on campus – *Environmentally Conscious Nutritionally Alive Population*. What an intriguing club name. Note to self – we need to engage this group in our efforts to change the food system on campus. Again, an example of initiative that places Joanna above other candidates.

As resumes came in for the coordinator positions '13-14, I was thrilled to see Joanna's in the pile. I interviewed about 15 applicants for six coordinator positions and Joanna was one of the strongest applicants. I really liked her very professional disposition and well developed thoughts on the role of nutrition in preventing disease and how she would get that message to the student via educational events/activities. Joanna accepted my offer to work with another coordinator to launch our new TASTE format in resident dining, featuring SPE certified dishes. I thought Joanna was a great fit to develop education and promote student participation in this new program since she herself was already so engaged.

The beginning of the academic year in late September was my most challenging opening yet. I have 23 openings worth of experience! With my new coordinator program as well as the introduction of the SPE certification program, with its corresponding marketing and promotional demands, I leaned heavily on Joanna to help me get the volunteer students who would actually *do* the education, organized, oriented, scheduled, etc.

As a coordinator, Joanna is expected to evaluate applications for the quarterly internship positions (we hire 6 volunteers per quarter and get quite a few applications), schedule interviews for those selected, interview, rank, and finally make a recommendation which students she thinks are the best fit and why. Upon my approval, she offers the positions to the

successful applicants and schedules the intern orientation meeting. She is also responsible for scheduling the students into each of the 3 dining commons, where they conduct the education events. That can be very tricky as students are so busy! Coordinator positions are one academic year in duration. During the Fall quarter I participate with the coordinators as they try out their new responsibilities (most having been an intern in the past for me). Winter and Spring quarters, they come to me if they need assistance as they complete their work. I meet weekly with them to touch bases.

Joanna demonstrates amazing commitment to her position, consistently delivering high quality, thorough work. I don't know if I did an exceptional job communicating to her my vision [I doubt it as my vision was blurry] or if she just shared the same goals and intuitively knew how to help. It was almost as though she could read my mind what she needed to do to support the launch while I was mired in operational details. She was always one step ahead of me with regards to scheduling volunteers, writing web articles and a press release for the SPE TASTE launch and developing marketing materials in conjunction with our marketing professionals. I knew she was working a lot and I was depending on her...I wasn't surprised to see she had worked over 40 hours that week we opened. Joanna continues to shine as a coordinator as we work our way through which parts of the program are working and what needs to be further developed; she works about 10 hours a week. Joanna also successfully dragged me into the world of google docs [many students have tried to do this]. She patiently and persistently shared and re-shared documents with me until I finally realized that the tool could drastically simplify my work.

Joanna and her co-coordinator conduct weekly meetings with the interns, keep a wikispot with weekly topic information for interns to review prior to each weekly topic and supervise them as they present information to guests in the dining commons as well as collect feedback on the dishes that have been certified.

In addition to her job here, Joanna is an officer in the club previously mentioned, and is a research assistant at the Foods for Health Institute here on campus, all while maintaining honors academically. She felt like she was lacking in foodservice experience and so is completing a guided experience in food service management in the Cuarto dining commons. That facility is our showcase with regard to healthy and sustainable food and Joanna is getting experience, not only in the food service management business, but also with some of the challenges that come with procurement of local product, keeping track of it through the production system and identifying it for the guest.

I notice Joanna listed results oriented, disciplined, compassionate and cooperative as well as dependable as the five adjectives that describe her. I would certainly agree with every one of these. Another real strength is communication. Via google docs, email and weekly meeting minutes, Joanna thoroughly shares every detail that interns may find useful and keeps me updated. She follows through on absolutely everything, gently reminding me when I fail to provide a piece of information she needs. From my perspective she is a talented leader, even though I see she listed that word as an area needing improvement. You need this young leader as part the incoming class at your facility.

It is without reservation that I highly recommend Joanna to graduate studies at your institution; please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Linda Adams