



Introduction

The University of the West Indies Mona Library has long been a place where students from various educational institutions flock to complete their required internship and community service. With its 22 hours per week-day opening hours, 16 hours on Saturdays and 8 hours on Sundays, and with no seating and standing distance restrictions, we were able to accommodate multiple students across the Library (including four branches), before the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic. With COVID-19 restrictions and a number of UWI and Library teaching and services going virtual, the UWI Mona Library, up to May 31 2022 operated with average opening hours of 8:30 am – 4:30 pm week days only. During 2021-2022, limited additional opening hours were provided for selected locations during the exam periods.

Notwithstanding our limitations and restrictions, during the period June 1 2020 – May 31 2022, the Library continued to accommodate students from the University of the West Indies and other educational institutions to complete periods of internship and community service as many other locations were closed or inaccessible to students for these purposes. Internship is often a requisite part of higher education programs and students may avail scholarships from various financial institutions and government agencies by undertaking community service at an established organization. By Facilitating students in this manner, the Library provided ongoing support and enabled students throughout 2020 – 2022.

Literature Review

The Benefits of Internship and Community Service

The benefits of Internships have been well documented. Benefits include gaining relevant and practical experiences, improved knowledge, better communication and job related skills, and better career preparation among other things (Coco, 2000; Beard, 2007; Weible and McClure 2011; Arif, Nunes, and Kanwal 2018). Many of these benefits apply to community service students and other student workers as well. They learn from training and direct work experience as well as from discussions with staff at the work site, fellow students, and their intern/community service supervisors. The period of internship and community service fosters understanding, development and networks for the student. For the organization, interns and community service students offer free service and may be a source of innovative and 'out of the box' ideas.

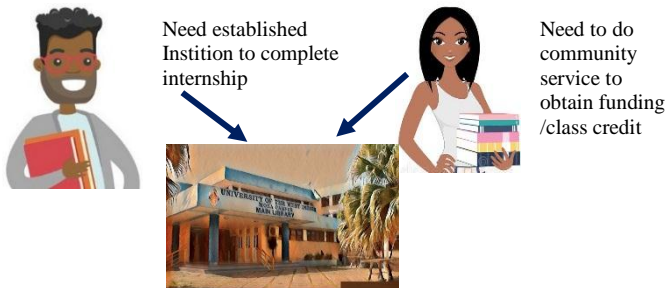
Professional Duty Assignments, Supervision and Evaluation of Students

Other important aspects of internship and community service includes supervision and evaluation of the participants. Beard (2007) notes that guidelines should be developed to include an orientation to the work world and identification of professional level duties for interns. Supervisors should be able to observe students skills, attitudes and propensity over the period of service in order to evaluate and make appropriate recommendations for student's development. An alert and astute student (intern/community service) may also make worthwhile recommendations based on their evaluation of the Library or other internship site. The UWI Mona Library fosters these important aspects of internship and community service by ensuring that program/projects are developed for all interns and an experienced senior member of staff supervises assignments and the work of interns and community service students. Also, an end of internship interview is conducted with students to obtain feedback about the program (Nutefall 2012).

Method

Data was gathered from internship and community service records kept at the Library. The author of this paper and the Section Library Assistant are the main coordinators of the program and therefore relevant experience was incorporated to enrich the data of this work.

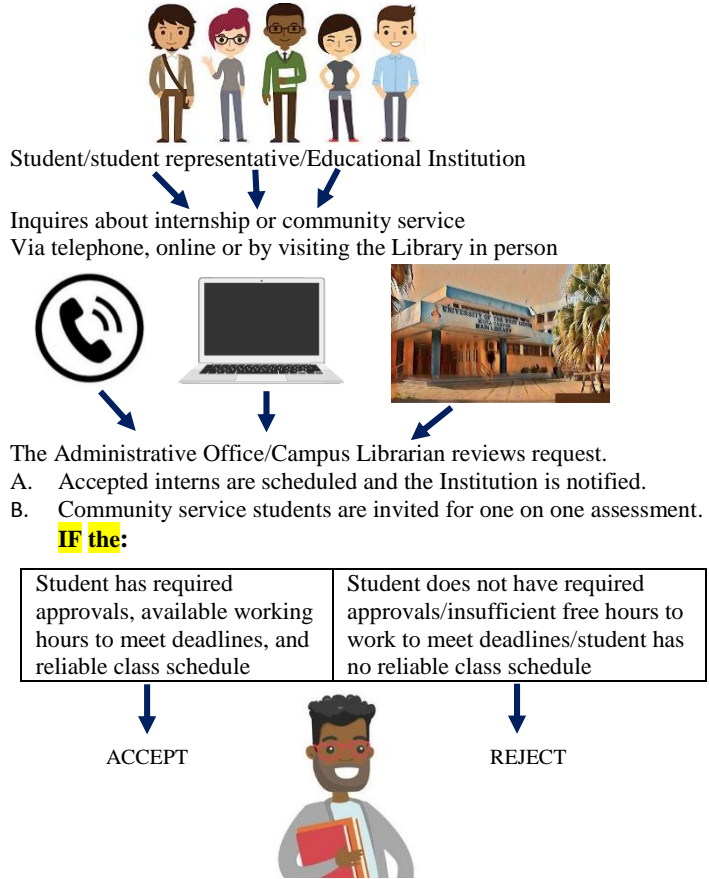
The UWI Mona Library Internship and Community Service Program



The Library facilitates and enables students. It connects what students have learned in the classroom to real world duties and responsibilities and enhances society's awareness of the work, facilities & services of an academic library through students.



How it works



Results

Interns and Community Service Students (CSS) June 1 2020 – May 31 2022

Table with 5 columns: No. of Students, Type of Student, Student Institution, Total hrs. Facilitated, Purpose. It lists 13 student entries with their respective institutions and hours.

Over a comparative period (June 2018-May 2020) there were 13 students from 4 institutions accommodated in a similar fashion, with 2600 hours of training & facilitation provided. Students completed almost twice the number of hours of training and service 2018-2020 in comparison to the period under review, primarily due to the extended Library opening hours in that period. However almost the same number of students were assisted during 2020-2022 notwithstanding the reduced opening hours and other COVID-19 related issues.

Conclusion

The UWI Mona Library faced a number of challenges in the period under review, including staff illnesses, national curfews and social distancing protocols but it continued to support and enable students. As discussed, although the number of hours for internship and the accommodation of community service students was greatly reduced over the period under review, the actual number of students facilitated did not significantly diminish.

References

List of references including Arif, M., Nunes, J.M.B., Kanwal, S. (2018), Beard, D.F. (2007), Coco, M. (2000), Nutefall, J.E. (2012), Weible, R. and McClure, R. (2011).

Acknowledgements: Sincere thanks to the UWI Mona Campus Librarian. A special thank you to Ms. Elaine Sauches for her contribution to this work. I also thank Missess Audrey Saddler, Kareen Lawrence and Alia Delmohammed who assisted me in various ways with this poster. Images and pictures were sourced from Dreamstime, iStock Photos, Aaron Kleinstieber, Shutter Stock Photos, and the UWI Mona Library.