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CPPL101

6 May 2020

1. After going through the extensive evaluation process that my team and I carried out, I believe that we made the correct decision in splitting the grant money between KEMS and FLAME evenly. Both of these groups were able to thoroughly convince us that they were doing work that aligned with our mission statement, and would be able to use the money from the grant in the most efficient ways. During the interview process, I had the opportunity to ask the representatives from these two organizations, along with a third, a variety of questions that would help us make a decision. The professionalism and the organization that both FLAME and KEMS displayed helped to convince me that they could be trusted to use the money exactly as they said they would, while simultaneously fulfilling the mission statement that we had established. Also, I feel as though both of these organizations are truly passionate about the work that they do, and this has led them to be able to make a significant difference for children in the communities surrounding UMD. Overall, I think the process went smoothly and the only thing I would have wanted to emphasize more in the group discussion was the size of the group of people that each organization helped.
2. The first thing that we learned in the fall that was useful throughout this process was about teamwork. Specifically, we read an article in the fall titled “Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter.” We learned that one reason why diverse teams often work better is because they tend to focus more on facts, rather than their own personal interest. I think this idea was crucial because in my group, we had a lot of diverse interests, but we were able to focus on the facts in order to reach a consensus that we all agreed on. Another crucial lesson that we learned in the fall was the material from the book “Getting to Yes.” In this book, we learned valuable negotiation skills, which were useful throughout this process because we often needed to advocate for our own opinions in order to make the best decision in the end.
3. One important concept that I learned in another course is interview skills. I learned about this in my Career Search Strategies business class. For example, we learned the importance of eye contact, and professionalism. I was able to transfer these skills into this course through the interviewing process. Although I was the one giving the interview, rather than the one being interviewed, a lot of the skills that I learned in my business class were still applicable.
4. One important leadership quality that I learned this semester was how to truly help the group move along when there are deadlines to meet. I think I learned how to step outside of my comfort zone and offer opinions on issues that I would not have in the past. Because of the limited amount of time we had to accomplish everything, I felt as though offering opinions that might be controversial was the best way to get things done in the best way. Another leadership quality that I learned this semester was professionalism. When interviewing the representatives from each group, I had to be professional, and show confidence, which is also something that I needed to work on coming into this semester.
5. The first thing that I think worked extremely well in this class was letting us choose what topic interests us. Allowing us to work towards an issue that we are passionate about made the process a lot more interesting because we all cared a lot about what we were doing. Another thing that worked really well was splitting us up into smaller groups within our topic groups, with each group focusing on a different task. I think that this worked well because it allowed us to get things done efficiently and focus on one task at a time, while the group could be getting multiple things done at once. Finally, the format that we used for interviews very well. Specifically, we had each group prepare a short presentation to cover any information that was not explained in their RFP. Then after this presentation, we had the opportunity to ask them questions that would fill in any information gaps that we still had. I think that this format allowed us to learn the most about the organizations in the most efficient ways.
6. Obviously, this class was not able to be executed as planned, due to the pandemic and distance learning orders. With this in mind, I think it is difficult to say what needs to be changed for the future. One thing that comes to mind is possibly allowing for more communication among teams. For example, teams that were having trouble making a decision could have gone to another team in order to receive a more neutral opinion. Another thing that could have been changed is the way in which we advertise the grant itself. Despite the fact that many organizations were likely preoccupied by other issues, I still believe that there are more effective ways that we could have advertised the grants, in order to receive more applicants. For example, posting more about it on social media, or possibly having an article about it in The Diamondback could have had a positive impact on the amount of applicants.