



Easy “How-to” Guide to Weekly Fellowships

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Kindness Fellow Intern - 2017
SHHS '16 / ND '20

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Words to the Reader

Prior to this summer, I had little to no experience planning fellowships. If someone had said that I would be organizing and leading gatherings that consisted of local students, community leaders, and school district leadership, I would have said “No Way! I can’t do that!” However, nothing is impossible, as I found out this summer.

My name is Yahterie-Anne Sykes Ortiz and I had the great opportunity to be the first Kindness Fellow Intern for the MIMS Institute Fellows, Inc. After spending a rewarding freshman year at the University of Notre Dame, I came home to continue promoting Academic Excellence in the East Side. I could do so through this unique Summer internship, which allowed me to discover new skills within myself, positively connect with leadership in my community, and explore new ideas.



The purpose of this “How-To” Guide is to provide others that may follow in my footsteps the means to recreate in the future what I have done this summer. Regardless of subject or topic, this guide should ease some of the anxiety of breaking ground on a new venture.

I wish you the very best of experiences as you navigate your own project or internship. May you learn new things about yourself, and have fun.

Sincerely,

Y. A. Sykes

Planning a Fellowship

If the word ‘planning’ connected with the idea of a project or event, makes you uncomfortable or feel like you want to run and hide—please, do not run. I know exactly how you feel. You may think you are unprepared or lacking the skills needed to plan a successful ‘anything’. That was exactly how I felt when I first started on the path of my weekly Academic Excellence Fellowships. Here is a starting point for you.

What is a Fellowship?

A formal dictionary definition of a fellowship is “friendly association, especially with people who share one’s interests”. This definition is so general that I feel it omits so much more. To fellowship is to come together to gather and share information while connecting and building relationships with the community.



The aim is that within a fellowship, you can create a platform where people can positively exchange ideas, viewpoints, and come together to effect a change.

Four Part Process

So, where do you start? Believe it or not, you do not have to re-invent the wheel. Keep in mind that others before you may have successfully accomplished something like what you are trying to do. It is okay to look around for that something that may help you on your project or event.

(Four Part Process, continued)

Once I calmed my nerves, I started to tackle the questions of how, where, what, and why. I realized that I naturally started following a process, which comprised of four parts:

- **Purpose** – It is necessary to have a clear idea of why you are doing the fellowship, event, or project. Is it to create awareness? Or is it to raise funds? Is your project going to provide a solution or effect a change?
- **Time** – Once you establish the purpose, then a timetable or schedule must be agreed upon. Is your project going to be ongoing with no end date? Is it going to take place once a week or twice a month? Do you have only a limited amount of time to prepare? Is there a specific date and time that works best?
- **Structure** – In this part of the process, I was attempting to stay organized as well as determine what my actual fellowships would be like. I considered my timetable and made decisions regarding location, communication options, whom to invite, etc. Also, this may be the part where you realize that you may need to recruit a few people to help you.
- **Reflection** – Out of all the parts, reflection will be used daily. What I mean is that you will always look at the work you have done, or the discussions regarding your event to see what you could have done better for next time. Or, what did you learned from it? Maybe you will change something because it did not work. I suggest that you keep a journal of sorts to write down those reflections.



Writing Agendas & Outcome Documents

No one likes being taken by surprise, least of all me. When I am invited to participate in something, I like having some knowledge of what it is about. In my recent experience, I realized that it is easier to convince people to join you if you provide that bit of knowledge.

Why an Agenda?

The agenda fulfills two important jobs. First, it is a road map to follow with all the stops clearly marked for everyone to see. If time is an issue, then an agenda keeps you on schedule. Secondly, it provides a written record of where you have been. I recommend that you keep it simple. I have provided a sample of the agenda format used during my internship.



Outcomes Document

If you are asking yourself, “What is an Outcomes Document?”, let me tell you that I asked the same thing. You may have heard it called something else. It is basically, a document that briefly summarizes some of what was discussed during a fellowship or event, as well as any actions that attendees agreed to take or follow up. I would say that it is different from taking meeting minutes in that an outcomes document covers actions to be undertaken.

I have provided a sample of the outcomes document that I created for my fellowships. Your document can look different based on the information you may need to maintain. There were a few instances where my document was longer than a page and included relevant photos. It is up to you to decide what is the best fit for your situation.

Spaghetti Wednesday Fellowship Agenda

June 21, 2017

5:30-7:30 PM

Fellowship Facilitators: Yahterie-Anne Sykes Ortiz, Ret. LTC Jason Mims

Invitees: Jonathan Gadison, Victoria Villesca, Brandy Vargas, Rosalinda Martinez, Abigail Martinez, Katrina Munoz, Tierra Starks, Dr. Mateen Diop, Mrs. Paula Gold-Williams, Mrs. Paula Chaison-Monroe, Valerie Alonzo, Iliana Contreras, Mrs. Marines, Mr. Reyes, Ms. Ortiz

Introduction

Icebreaker – Academic Excellence & My Passions/Strengths

- a) Open Discussion; Share thoughts

Purpose:

Fellowship over the next 8 weeks to talk about Academic Excellence

- Fellowship to touch on the ‘Not-so Yellow Brick Road’ to college

Market Tier One Universities on the Eastside

- Discussion on initial thoughts/info on a Sam Houston H.S. hosted College Fair

Strengthen/Support Students on the Rise

- Discussion on inviting prospective students through SOTR members to Academic Excellence fellowships

Dinner

Suggestions/ Announcements

- Update on Tierra Starks’ fundraising initiative

Adjournment – NEXT Fellowship on Wednesday, June 21, 2017 @ 5:30.

Outcome Document

Present:

Dr. Linda Vargas-Lew SAISD Director of College and Career Readiness	Terry Flores Lopez Admin Assistant to SAISD Director of College and Career Readiness	Ret. LTC Jason Mims SHHS '71, ND '75
Tierra Starks SHHS '17, Pomona '21	Iris Starks Parent	Yahterie-Anne Sykes SHHS '16, ND '20
Shaquille Murray Communities in School Mentor Coordinator	Tevin Ellis NAACP Regional Youth Director	

Purpose: To fellowship over the next 8 weeks to talk about Academic Excellence, market Tier One Universities on the Eastside, and strengthen/support Students on the Rise.

Outcomes:

1. Provided a platform for various organizations (CiS, NAACP, SAISD) to be introduced to Tierra Starks and her journey.
2. Provided a platform for Tierra Starks to speak of her college preparedness experience thus far.
3. Agreement of NAACP representative to speak to the NAACP Board in Baltimore to invite Tierra Starks to present her story at the National NAACP Convention.
4. Received invitation from CiS Mentor Coordinator, Shaquille Murray, to possibly collaborate with MIMS Institute to form a partnership to further assist students.
5. Received invitation from Dr. Vargas-Lew to meet with her and the new SHHS principal on July 13, 2017 at 1pm.
6. Received invitation from Dr. Vargas-Lew to reach out to her for further resource information.

Next fellowship: Wednesday, July 24, 2017 at 5:30pm, Spaghetti Warehouse.

Prepared by:

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 SHHS Class of 2016 /Notre Dame Class of 2020

Icebreakers and/or Topics of Discussion



Think about all the times you may have walked into a room full of strangers. Did you feel comfortable saying anything in front of the room or to anyone in that room? The answer is probably no. Perhaps, you may have thought that you had nothing in common with anyone there.

Icebreakers

The main goal of an Icebreaker is to help people get to know each other and to engage in conversation. It could be an activity, event, or game. A good icebreaker will warm up the conversation, reinforce your fellowship topic, and guarantee that your participants enjoy themselves.

You are possibly thinking that is well and good, but what about me? How do I get this started? Depending on your timetable and your situation, you decide what fits best. For example, I held my weekly academic excellence fellowships in a restaurant with an approximate timetable of two hours. Based on my main subject (academic excellence), I chose to write my personal thoughts and experiences related to topics that connect to that subject. Then, I emailed the weekly reflection out to my invitees. That way they had time to read it, and I could save time at the fellowship. Also, it created a way for me to start our conversations.

There is no right or wrong way to do an icebreaker, but it does take a bit of thought and preparation. To brainstorm some Icebreakers, I suggest the following websites:

- Icebreaker Ideas at <https://icebreakerideas.com/funny-icebreakers-kids-adults-teens/>
- Icebreakers.WS at <http://www.icebreakers.ws/get-to-know-you>

(Icebreakers and/or Topics of Discussion, continued)

Topics of Discussion

Things to remember, when you are choosing your topics of discussions:

- Do your research.
- Keep the topics of discussion relevant to your overall purpose and/or project.
- Consider your audience –are they knowledgeable about the topic?
- If the chosen topic is complex or large in data/information, then break it up into parts that are easy to discuss and cover those later.



Research, Brainstorming, and Projects

For the most part, my internship consisted of projects, research, and brainstorming sessions. To hold my weekly academic excellence fellowships, I had to research some topics, locate contact information for local public figures, and a few times I brainstormed with my mentor, Retired LTC Jason Mims, how to turn an idea into a project. There were a few ideas that came from suggestions raised by attendees of the fellowships.

Research

“Oh no, research!” You probably had flashbacks to a dreaded school research paper and how you were up all night getting it done. Research is not always like that. But, I do have to tell you that I have not found anything worth doing that did not include some research.

Research can be as simple as clicking on a link to an article from a credible source (i.e. San Antonio Express News, Times magazine, a published paper in a known journal). I learned much through my research using Google, but my best sources of information were the people I talked to in person. The best advice I can give you about research for a project is to narrow down your topic and give yourself plenty of time to get as much relevant information as possible. My mother always says, “Knowledge is Power”. It means the more you know about something, the better prepared you are to discuss it or do work in it.

Brainstorming and Projects

The picture you see is the result of a brainstorming session that turned into a project. One part of my internship was to market Tier One universities on the East Side. Why? Because there are no ads there inviting students to explore and apply to those top national colleges.



August 1, 2017 -Kickoff of the "We are the Billboard" campaign

(Four Part Process, continued)

During a brainstorming session, you voice ideas, no matter how far-fetched or outrageous, as solutions to a problem or issue that you wish to address. In my case, it was lack of advertising promoting Tier One universities. Previously, my mentor had done some research into the cost of billboard ads and he shared that information with me. It is expensive, so by brainstorming, we came up with the idea to use banners held by students during key events held in the East Side. And guess what...? A project was born.

Once again, research is key. We explore how difficult it would be to have banners made. Cost and where to make the banners were the major considerations. Once the order was submitted, we presented the “We are the billboard” project to prospective students that could volunteer to help at the first event. At last on August 1st, we executed the outcome of the project.

It is up to you how easy or complicated your project may be. However, all projects have the same three parts – cost, schedule, performance.



Invites/RSVPs



In my opinion, the hardest part of my fellowships was the Invites/RSVPs. I was constantly second guessing my wording on the invites. Did I strike a balance between being myself and formality? Did I add all the important information my invitees needed to respond? My other issue with Invites/RSVPs was the lack of response from those receiving them.

When I was ready to invite people to my weekly fellowships, I followed this specific steps:

- Send out initial e-mail invite at least 3 days in advance.
- Send out a reminder the day before fellowship.
- Check for responses.

Soon, I realized that I had to do more to have an accurate count of attendees each week. Most of my invitees had Facebook accounts, so I created a Facebook Event that appeared in their timelines. Also, I placed wording in the invites requesting a response by a certain date and time. Another step I took was to text or message a reminder the day of the fellowship.



Depending on your situation, it may become necessary to personally call your invitees directly to get a response as to whether they will attend your event. No matter how you chose to do your invites, make sure you keep the wording and interaction cordial.

**Don't Forget to
RSVP!**

E-mail Etiquette and Contact List/Network

Let's talk about e-mails and the contact list. I must say that I wrote more e-mails during my summer internship than I have done my entire life. The reason for this is that I am more comfortable texting or instant messaging. However, e-mailing is more common in a professional setting, such as an internship, job, or contacting organizations and community leaders. Also, as you network (connect) to people during your project, you will find that a contact list naturally develops. In this section, I will give you a few tips about e-mail etiquette and what I learned about contact lists/network.

E-mail 101

One thing I quickly learned during my internship is that it is best to create a draft of the e-mail message you wish to send. The hardest part for me has always been deciding on the e-mail subject line. I was given the following advice to writing a perfect subject line:

- Be precise
- Summarize the message
- If action is required from the recipient, say so.
- Leave out unnecessary word

Example: Subject Line: 2nd Fellowship Invitation

Suggested Subject Line: Invitation: Respond Wednesday Fellowship, Jun 14th@ 5:30pm



(E-mail 101, continued)

Other pieces of advice that I learned along the way are about the e-mail message itself. These are the reason why I write a draft:

- Review your e-mail message before hitting SEND.
- Keep it short and easy to read. Be clear.
- Talk about one subject per e-mail.
- Punctuation and grammar matter a lot.

There are occasions when a short e-mail message may not be possible. If that is the case, remember to stay on topic, use bullet points, and make sure important information is easy to find.

List of Contacts/ Network

A famous woman that overcame personal adversity once said, “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.” Helen Keller’s words are very fitting when you consider a contact list and networking. Every person you meet becomes can bring special knowledge, resources, and support to your cause.

During my internship, I established connections with school district leaderships, local politicians, and community leaders. Every time I was given a business card, I placed the contact information into my cell phone and to my e-mail contacts. The list of contacts is helpful to keep you organized, but also creates a list of possible sponsors for further projects or event



Sample of Invite Email

Yahterie-Anne S <ysykes2k16@gmail.com>

2nd Fellowship Invitation

4 messages

Yahterie-Anne S <ysykes2k16@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 12, 2017 at 7:04 PM

To: Abigail Martinez, Brandy Vargas, Jonathan Gadison, Katrina Munoz, Rosalinda Martinez, Tierra Starks, "Ms. Marines"

Cc: "Ortiz, Anne D.", "Jason D. Mims"

Hi all,

Our last Spaghetti Wednesday Fellowship on June 7th was a success!

I am inviting you once again to meet with me at Spaghetti Warehouse this coming Wednesday, June 14th @ 5:30pm.

Congratulations to Tierra Starks and Jason Orosco, Graduating Seniors. Jason will be missed as he starts at UTEP this summer.

I encourage the members of the Sam Houston Students on the Rise Advisory Council to invite a prospective 9th, 10th, or 11th grade SHHS student to attend the upcoming fellowship.

Attached is the Agenda for the meeting and topic of discussion. Please let me know if you will be attending and bringing/inviting a prospective student.

Any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me through email, FB messenger, or call/text [210.987.6543](tel:210.987.6543)

Thank you,
Yahterie-Anne Sykes Ortiz

2 attachments



AcademicExcellenceandMyPassionsStrengths.docx

6K



Spaghetti Wednesday Agenda_14June2017.docx

26K

Sample of Request E-mail

Yahterie-Anne S <ysykes2k16@gmail.com>

Possibility for another article on a SHHS Student

1 message

Yahterie-Anne S <ysykes2k16@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 20, 2017 at 10:07 PM

To: "Bekah S. McNeel"

Cc: "Jason D. Mims", Tierra Starks

Good Morning Bekah,

I hope you are having a blessed Summer.

Firstly, I wanted to thank you for writing the article about my journey to the University of Notre Dame last year. I completed my freshman year successfully and I'm excitedly looking forward to my sophomore year. As a Sam Houston Alumni, I continue to promote Academic Excellence at my alma mater. I was wondering if you would be interested in writing another article to showcase a 2017 graduate of Sam Houston High School.

Tierra Starks is making history as the first Sam Houston student ever to be accepted into Pomona College in Claremont, CA.

It is a great academic achievement for Tierra as well as the Eastside Promise Neighborhood. She will be bringing a Sam Houston presence to Pomona College, which will pave the way for future students to walk in her footsteps. Tierra was the Salutatorian of her graduating class, as well as President of National Honor Society and Vice-President of the Student Council. During her four years of high school, she challenged herself to excel in all the activities that would enrich her education.

However, nothing worth having is without sacrifice. Like many of our students on the Eastside, Tierra is facing some disadvantages. Pomona College has agreed to cover half of the tuition and Tierra has been awarded some scholarships. Unfortunately, her family still has a financial hurdle to overcome. I have included information regarding fundraising efforts on her behalf.

I wanted to ask if you could help bring attention to Tierra's story through an article in the Rivard Report. Also, attached to this email is an open invitation to join us in Academic Excellence Fellowship. Tierra will be attending a handful of these Wednesday fellowships, and you are welcome to attend.

Attached as well are documents pertaining to the weekly Academic Excellence Fellowships.

Please let me know if this request is possible.

Thank you,

Yahterie-Anne Sykes

Kindness Fellow

MIMS Institute (a nonprofit org)

Reflection Writing

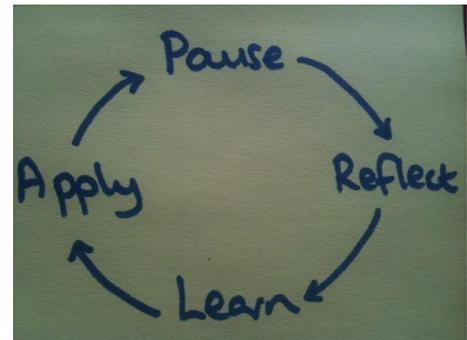
Writing Criteria

The 'macro' question that you are answering in this paper is "SO WHAT?" So what that you did this internship? Whom does it affect? How might it be useful? How did your experience connect to your academic work? How did you grow intellectually and/or personally?

Your internship was a highly individual experience, your paper will also be unique, addressing those specific topics and questions that concerned you.

1. a short description of what you did daily, and
2. then demonstrate your analytical ability in your reflection on your experiences.

If you kept a journal/notes, then those are a good place to recover insights, connections, changes, small incidents that highlight larger issues, and common threads. Rely on these for a sense of perspective on the internship; the more complete a journal you kept, the easier this paper should be to write.



Listed are a series of questions which should be answered as you compose your essay:

1. Discuss how the internship confirmed or stimulated new thinking about your educational and/or career direction.
2. Describe two or more examples of learning related to your attitude toward work, other people, or yourself in the work environment.
3. Present two or more examples of skills acquired or enhanced because of participating in the internship.

(Writing Criteria, continued)

4. Based on the internship experience describe two or more kinds of work or tasks that you would want or not want to pursue in the future.
5. In what specific ways was your internship both worthwhile and disappointing? Cite examples of interactions, events, personalities, and/or behavior that formed your reaction to the experience.
6. What coursework or previous experience helped you function effectively? What courses or experiences do you think could have been beneficial had you experienced them before you began your work?
7. Explain how the internship was of value to you.
8. Explain how your participation in the internship is valued by the organization and/or its clientele.
9. Summarize your internship experience.



Reflection Paper Sample Outline

I. Description of internship (brief) and to include:

- responsibilities
- skills learned
- project description
- problems encountered
- your expectations/goals: how and why they were or were not met

II. Analysis of internship in terms of the following:

- a brief overview of the organization's mission/work and how your project contributed or related to that
- what you learned, changes you experienced
- ethical considerations/issues

III. Relationship of internship or project to your academic and/or professional career.

Sample of Reflective Writing

(Excerpt from My Kindness Fellow Internship Reflective Essay)

Every time I reflected on what I would discuss at the fellowships, I placed myself in my past junior/senior shoes in high school. My thoughts converged on the things I wished I would have asked, or the advice I wished I had from those that had recently gone to college before me. The path to college is not clear cut and can be very different for each person. I feel grateful that there were people very close to me that could guide me part of the way. At the fellowships, some topics were directly related to my experience on what I call, “the not-so-yellow brick road” to college. It was my goal to let the rising seniors know that I knew how they felt, and had felt the same anxiety of the unknown. I would like to think that I have made the difference for them by providing an outlet to voice those concerns, but also a helping hand.

Each week, I was surprised by how receptive the students were to the information that I had to share. They were attentive and engaged. Not only that, the students were willing to share information with one another and listen to viewpoints different from their own. I feel that the overall exchange of information made a positive impact on everyone that attended. These fellowships created a platform where everyone could voice their ideas and be heard. It was also a wonderful opportunity to learn from each other.



Afterword -- Jason D. Mims, Notre Dame '75

Yahterie-Anne lives in my ZIP code (78220) on San Antonio's Eastside. The University of Notre Dame, the way I see it, invested over \$60,000 in my ZIP code during her freshman year at Notre Dame. Every additional year that she is there represents another \$60,000-plus investment in my ZIP code. I am conscious of the possibility that after her four years at Notre Dame, someone might ask, "What did your ZIP code do with the quarter-of-a-million dollar Notre Dame invested in your community?"

There is real beauty in just watching Notre Dame further develop the gifts that Yahterie-Anne brought to Notre Dame. Whenever she is home, we recognize the same kind person. We do get the sense, though, that she eagerly tempts us to make use of her growth. Members of her community embraced her kindness this summer and contributed to the further development of her ability to preach the "Sermons We See." She demonstrated the value our Emerging Leaders have for engaging peers, community leaders, and others interested in public education.

The right person for the internship. There is nothing stamped on Yahterie-Anne's forehead that suggests that she could change the landscape over the summer on her side of town. In early June, there was a little 22-page guide called "Easy 'How-to' Guide to Weekly Fellowships." The pages, back then, looked blank. Three months later, there is something of value on each page.

More significantly, the summer weeks included Academic Excellence Fellowships where Academic Excellence was on the community agenda every week. What did the Eastside do with the first part of the Notre Dame investment? We had Yahterie-Anne preach a sermon through her actions. The message: Academic Excellence Matters on San Antonio's Eastside.

During the Welcome Weekend a year ago, the Dean of Notre Dame's First Year of Studies, Dr. Rev. Hugh Page, invited the members of the Class of 2020 to "Explore, Dream Big, and Make A Difference." This summer, Eastside San Antonio became the beneficiary of Yahterie-Anne's exploration (she calls it "research" in the guide). We both experienced the same Big Dream during our second fellowship. We saw empty tables and chairs that begged for butts to participate in Academic Excellence Fellowships. We now have witnessed what it looks like to fill the seats! This guide makes a difference. "Jason, what was the last good book that you read?" Answer: "Easy 'How-to' Guide to Weekly Fellowships."

This gift resulting from Notre Dame's investment is now a tool. We move forward with a hammer, some nails, and a guide for keeping Academic Excellence on our community's agenda.

Thank you, Yahterie-Anne, for showing us what "Notre Dame Force for Good" looks like

