FROM CAMEROON TO CAMPUS DINING

Student employee’s diverse experiences fuel nonprofit

By Loic Assobmo

Loic Assobmo is the winner of the NACAS College Services Student Feature Article Contest, sponsored by Sodexo. Students were asked to submit articles on the topic of “How Auxiliary Services Has Influenced My College Experience.” Sodexo generously donated a $500 cash scholarship prize for first place and additional prizes of $300 and $200 for second and third place. The second place winner is Imani Whittlefield and third place is Victoria Karle. The following article is Assobmo’s winning essay.

I come from two worlds: one of Cameroon, Africa, and another of Brockton, MA, USA. The contrast of these two worlds and the shared hardship that my family has experienced in both, made me take advantage of the opportunity to work for dining services at Boston College (BC) not only to fund my college education, but also to lead complex projects, run multifaceted operations, develop employable skills and aspire to do great things. As a result of my experience working with Boston College’s dining services, I have been equipped with the experience, skills, courage and tools that have inspired me to be a medical entrepreneur who finds ways to give back to the community.

In Cameroon, I grew up in an apartment with poor electricity and few opportunities to attain good education. When I moved to Brockton, MA, at the age of 9, I was surrounded by economic poverty, peer mentality of mediocrity, and a stagnant environment. Nonetheless, through my hunger for success, my perseverance and my motivation, I was accepted into Boston College. As a freshman, I began working for dining services as a way to fund my education. Ironically, my goals quickly expanded.

Within the first few weeks of working with dining services, I had learned a few accounting skills like how to run an inventory analysis; use Excel for accounting purposes; utilize macros; pay an invoice from a vendor; and complete vendor payment research, communication, and purchase history examination. Not much later, I was placed on a historical audit project. Along with a team of five other students and advisors, we were tasked with designing a process to audit about a year’s worth of food purchases from 11 of our university’s dining halls. This was a really tough project, but I used the motivation and perseverance I had developed through my childhood experiences to stick with it and learn many valuable skills.

At the end of the project, although we were only able to save the university a few thousand dollars’ worth of credits, I learned how much trust, accountability and responsibility was placed on the team to complete the project. The thought that I was able to help the university save money made me feel empowered, important and eager about what other great things I could do. Apparently, my boss noticed this eagerness and soon added to my responsibilities. I quickly found myself in charge of planning...
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and overseeing the weekend operations from my division. This meant I was responsible for leading a team of about eight students every weekend and making sure that the inventory analysis, transfer research analysis, and price change analysis for all the dining hall units at the university were completed with excellence every weekend for an entire academic year. This was a task I took seriously because the managers of the dining halls depended on me to assign them a student and adjust my plans based on their schedules; the students on my team expected me to be prepared and available to assist them through unexpected issues; and the accounting staff expected our work to be accurate so that our budgets can be balanced and our operations could run smoothly.

Working on this project, I not only developed great leadership and teamwork skills, but I also learned how to use different software technologies such as FoodPro and PeopleSoft. There were times when I had to train other students on how to use these technologies. Over time, I realized the amount of trust, accountability and responsibility that was once again being put on me and my team to get things done in an effective and reliable way. This continued to empower and encourage me to believe that I was capable of doing great things.

The skills, motivation and empowerment I gained through my experience with dining services ultimately encouraged me to launch my own nonprofit organization called the Global Establishment for Medical Advancement (GEMA). GEMA is a United States-based organization that brings cognizance and solutions to crises crippling the healthcare system in Africa. Although this organization does not do anything related to dining services, it was my experience working with BC dining that encouraged me to believe that I could be trusted, accountable and responsible for successfully running multifaceted operations, and making a positive contribution and impact to an organization.

The research skills I learned as an intern with BC dining allowed me to complete research required for my organization. The leadership and teamwork skills I learned from BC dining allowed me to work effectively with a team and launch a website for GEMA (tgema.weebly.com). The vendor research and communication skills I learned while working with dining services helped me establish partnerships for my organization because I knew how to communicate with business professionals. In addition, this also helped me launch a newsletter that reaches about 400 people monthly.

Overall, the experiences of the two worlds I come from, along with my experience working with dining services at BC, has inspired me to adjust my dream of becoming a doctor to instead becoming a medical entrepreneur who creates economic opportunity for others, tackles regional medical issues in poverty-stricken communities, advances the field of medicine in pragmatic applications to society, and gives back to the communities from which I come. Dining services has empowered, encouraged and motivated me so much that I have achieved things I only used to dream about. In addition, it has enabled me to see that I can achieve great things. This is ultimately why I continue to aspire higher.

Loic Assombo is a sophomore biology major with a premed concentration at Boston College, where he is an accounting intern in Auxiliary Services. He is also a Resident Assistant, Peer Leadership Consultant and Vice President for the Multicultural Christian Fellowship. Assombo, who is passionate about biology, innovation and entrepreneurship, is the visionary behind the Global Establishment for Medical Advancement; focused on bringing cognizance and solutions to crises crippling the healthcare system in Africa. He seeks sponsorship, partnerships, and endorsements in order to execute and implement his cutting-edge, innovative and impactful solutions. His inspiration for this vision comes from his personal experience as a born native of Cameroon, Africa, a past intern for the Robert R. Taylor Network, and an intern for Boston College Auxiliary Services. He can be reached at assobmo@bc.edu.