



Leadership Initiatives Co-op



Brigitte Gong, Sociology major
January-June 2018

How did you spend the majority of your time in co-op?

Administrative tasks

- Logistics for events:
 - Tracking attendance
 - Ordering catering
 - Communicating to attendees and guests
- Data entry/management
- Fielding various inquiries into our Leadership Development programs

Special Project

- Promotional Videos for each of our three programs
- Managed the project myself (w/ help from my manager)
 - Reaching out to alumni for interviews
 - Renting video equipment
 - Filming/editing/animating

Other Projects

- Researching speakers
- Helping organize an alumni council
- Contributing to other teams at my organization

Who were my co-workers?



My fellow interns/co-ops!
L to R: me, Liliana, Justyne, and Shane

Having other co-ops in the office was super fun! We all sat at one table together and all worked in different departments so I was able to glean what the rest of the organization was doing



The Leadership Initiatives Team
L to R: Alyson, who joined the team early June;
Caitlin, my manager; and me!

For most of my co-op, it was just me and my manager working together and that was great. It was very helpful to have another person join our team though, as we had a lot on our plate!

What did you hope to learn on this co-op?

1. Continue to build communication skills both within my organization and externally
2. Develop organizational skills to own a project and execute it from conception of idea to final product
3. Continue to develop professional skills more broadly
4. Deepen understanding of how organizations in Boston interact with each other, the city as a whole, and how they are shaping policies

Discuss the most difficult or challenging activity that you engaged in during co-op.

- My manager saw that I had video production skills and asked if I wanted to produce promo videos for each of our three leadership programs as my special project for the co-op (I obviously said yes!)
- I had made several videos before and wasn't that worried about any of my technical skills. What was really challenging about this project was making sure I was organized throughout the process so that things that had to be done weeks ahead of filming were done on time. I also had to communicate within my organization and outside of it to make sure everyone had all the information they needed to support the project and make it run smoothly. This included finding alumni to interview, working with them (or their assistant) to schedule a time to interview, renting equipment, preparing questions and briefs for the interviewees, etc.
- My manager helped guide me through the process and advised me on a rough timeline for the project. She also helped guide the content of the videos as well.
- I learned a lot about how to execute a big picture idea in an efficient and organized way. There were a few hiccups along the way but I think for the most part, I did a good job of anticipating problems that would come up and finding help when I needed it.

Discuss what you learned about yourself and your work/learning style on your co-op.

- I learned I really enjoy working on small teams and on projects that were more collaborative in nature. Although my manager was technically my boss, she asked for my input on many projects she was working on and that really made me feel like I was part of the team.
- I learned I need to ask for help more often! Often I truly believe I can complete a task all by myself but that's not always the most productive nor effective way to do that task.
- I learned that workflow tools (like Trello or Airtable) are very helpful for me, since I tend to be more of a big picture thinker and it can be hard for me to figure out how to actually execute that idea. With such tools, I can visualize the whole process and move things around as the project evolves.
- I learned about program development and discovered it was something I would possibly be interested in doing after I graduate.

Please describe a job, task, activity that you did during co-op that you had never done before.

- There were a lot of things I had never done before that I ended up doing a lot of at my co-op.
- One of the big things was understanding the logistics behind putting on an event and making sure everything is ready for that event. Things like ordering catering, planning details with speakers, gathering RSVPs, discussing room set up/AV needs were all new for me. My manager helped me through those tasks and towards the end of my co-op, I was able to run events by myself!
- I also attended a lot of events before and after working hours which was new for me as well. My manager made sure I had good work/life balance though and would encourage me to go home early if I worked a 7 am event (which happened quite a bit!)

Please describe the most exciting, meaningful, or interesting job, task, activity, etc. that you did during your co-op.

Women's Network



Features women in executive leadership positions in a conversation or panel about what leadership and life skills they've learned!



Please describe the most exciting, meaningful, or interesting job, task, activity, etc. that you did during your co-op.

Other major events



Bertil and Edward Hult of EF Education First speaking at our Leadership Forum, a half-day leadership development conference I helped plan!



Above: the Pinnacle awards, celebrating outstanding women in business.

Below: Annual Meeting, where we had Bozoma St. John as our keynote!



Please describe the most exciting, meaningful, or interesting job, task, activity, etc. that you did during your co-op.

Leadership development events!



I also got to sit in on sessions at Harvard Business School (above) and MIT Sloan School of Management (below)



Above: our Boston's Future Leaders participants went behind the scenes at WGBH and got to speak with Jim Braude and Margery Egan of Boston Public Radio

How did your co-op affect you?

- This co-op really plugged me into the business sphere in the Greater Boston area, and as a result, I learned a lot about the many different companies in Boston and what they were doing, as well as who some of our most influential leaders are.
- It has changed how I think about cities and what exactly makes them thrive. At the Chamber, we talked a lot about how to retain and develop talent in the area, which I had never even thought about before. Our policy team was also involved in advocating for local policies and it made me realize how much of those laws affect how I live in the city.
- I was a bit skeptical coming into this co-op that the organization wouldn't fit my social justice ideas/goals, but I learned that the Chamber really had the platform to shape important conversations around topics such as gender and racial inequality.
- Overall, I feel like I have a better grasp on how my major (sociology) can be applied to real issues that businesses and people are facing.

Academic question: In what ways did your co-op experience help you to better understand the nature, organization or manifestation of social inequality (ability, age, citizenship/nationality, gender, political, race, religion, sexuality, etc.) in society or in social organizations?

- The Chamber is home to the largest women's business network in New England. Through attending breakfast events and sessions with our Women's Leadership Program, I learned a lot about the challenges women still face in the business world even in 2018. Even if there are less instances of overt sexism, there are still many ways people can be implicitly biased against you that may prevent you from advancing in your career as quickly as a man would.
- A lot of the lessons I heard from women leaders had to do with how to advocate for yourself, stand up for your abilities/work, and create opportunities for yourself. It also seemed like there was still a large disparity between the number of women working at a business and who was in those top leadership roles. I think it really speaks for itself that our events for women's professionals were some of our most attended events, since women were clearly trying to find ways to advance their careers and be part of a community of other driven women.
- Finally, I also learned how organizations with influence like the Chamber can affect positive change in businesses, which is really through creating policies and programs. One such program is Pacesetters, which is an initiative that helps minority-owned businesses get contracts with some of the largest organizations in Boston including John Hancock, P&G, and more. We are also working on creating a leadership program around culture change and how to ensure a diverse and equitable workplace. As a large member organization, we were able to use our wide network to connect businesses, provide opportunities, and center discussions around important topics.