

Professional Service Project



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A Reflection on CMU: Outside the Classroom

By: Suruchi Sheth

Introduction

In my time at Carnegie Mellon, I have noticed that the passionate and driven students that attend, do not think twice to take advantage of the plethora of opportunities available at the school. As I near my graduation, I firmly believe that I have taken all that this school has given to me and gotten the most out of it. The busy semesters, filled calendars, and sleepless nights allowed me to become stronger as a person and have me perspective on the impact that I hope to have on the world around me.

Reflecting back on my college experiences, it is fulfilling to know that through all of my extracurricular and internship experiences, I was able to gain and develop skills for professional development. Specifically, my activities and unpaid internships classify these skills into professional service practices. These practices

include using professional skills and knowledge, developing leadership skills, developing professional networks, and recognizing the importance of community involvement and social responsibility.

The organizations that have allowed me to exhibit professional service are Bhangra in the Burgh (500 hours from 2012-2015), CMU Raasta (approximately 1000 hours in 2015-2016 academic year, also very involved from 2012-2015), internships at Dakorum (d.b.a. SNOWE Home), Digital Firefly Marketing and Agency 1903 (500 hours from Summer 2014, Summer 2015, Spring 2016), and Kappa Alpha Theta (50-75 hours from 2012-2016).

In this paper, I will go into each of the previous stated categories and explain how my experiences with these organizations have allowed me to reflect on each in the perspective of



*CMU Raasta Fall 2015
Photoshoot*

professional service. My long-term commitment with Bhangra in the Burgh, CMU Raasta, and Kappa Alpha Theta, and my in-depth marketing experience at several different internships allowed me to gain and develop several skills that I will be able to use in the future. I look forward to taking these reflections and lessons with me as a I graduate from the Tepper School of Business and start my journey in the professional world.



Part One: Professional service broadens one's opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge through practice.

Bhangra in the Burgh

Bhangra in the Burgh (BIB) is a non-profit, entirely student-run Bhangra competition affiliated with Carnegie Mellon University. It is a platform that brings together the top Bhangra teams from across North America to compete on one stage in a night of music, dance, and celebration of South Asian culture. A board of 20 college students organizes a colorful exhibition of the energy and excitement that Bhangra represents. Since its first competition in 2007, Bhangra in the Burgh has grown exponentially and currently stands as the largest student-run event in Pittsburgh. Over the past nine years, Bhangra in the Burgh has successfully attracted a sold-out crowd of 2,300 each year and raised a total of over \$75,000 for local Pittsburgh charities. I have been fortunate to be involved with this organization for the past four years, and

I have grown with it as I experienced different obstacles and learned several takeaways that allowed me to improve my skills and knowledge.

My involvement with BIB began just a few weeks into my college career at CMU. In September 2012, I was one of three selected freshmen to be a part of the BIB6 Executive Board. As a freshman representative, I had the opportunity to sit in on board meetings and give my input on the planning process for the competition that fall. I was also in charge of planning the Late Night Event at Carnegie Mellon one week before the show. Late Night events, hosted by student organizations, house communities, and university departments, take place at the University every Friday and Saturday night, offering fun, free activities for Carnegie Mellon students. For BIB, the goal of the event was to create

hype, raise awareness, and sell tickets to the show. We sent several emails to dance teams, and other organizations on campus to organize a performance schedule. We also contacted local Pittsburgh companies for sponsorship. This event required much advertising on campus and online. I also created an event poster that was spread around the web and posted on campus. Freshmen representatives are also responsible for hosting Team Dinner the night before the show. Team Dinner is a formal event in which the performing teams come for a nice dinner, accompanied by mixer games to get to know



*Bhangra in the Burgh 8
Fall 2014*

each other. My job was to organize the program for the night and facilitate decorations. The highlight of this experience was creating centerpieces for the tables that looked like little Bhangra dancers.

I was able to continue my efforts for BIB as I was selected to be one of two Public Relations chairs for Bhangra in the Burgh 7 the following year. This is a more official position on the executive board, as the planning starts in March/April. The public relations campaign for Bhangra in the Burgh is very important. My co-chair and I were in charge of social media PR, on-campus and off-campus PR, and developing new and creative PR campaigns for the show. For BIB7, we took the marketing strategy in a different direction in order to raise more awareness in a different way. Our new strategy involved developing "BIB spirit competitions", in order to get the Carnegie Mellon community more excited for the show, and also have more attendees from the greater Pittsburgh Community. We also created team



*Bhangra in the Burgh 7
Fall 2013*

competitions to encourage the competing teams to get excited for the weekend. This was a huge success, especially through social media, as we were able to paint Facebook and Instagram purple (the theme color of the year). This was also the first year BIB used Instagram and utilized a "#burgh7" campaign. Since then, BIB has developed unique hash tags for each year and has incorporated the BIB7 tactics into its core marketing strategy. I also took it upon myself to make a teaser video for BIB7 and the staff thank you video that was shown at the end of the show. After the show, we received feedback from

many alumni, saying that the PR campaign for that year was better than ever before.

In my final year on the BIB Executive Board, I was one of three co-directors for Bhangra in the Burgh 8. This is the highest It was my job to oversee the Public Relations, Pittsburgh Liaison, Webmaster, and Design Chairs. The co-chair position is the highest on the executive board, directly handling all finances and official contact between Carnegie Mellon Student Activities, teams, the e-board, and the student staff. As a member of the executive board for both BIB6 and BIB7, this was the



*Bhangra in the Burgh 8 Executive Board
Fall 2014*

final step for me in my involvement with the organization. Preparation began in March as we interviewed candidates for various executive board positions. Throughout the summer, we worked to get a website up and application packets out to teams. We also invited Chai Town A Capella, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which was the first famous group to perform at BIB as an exhibition act. The next several months involved logistics and management for team hospitality, emcee selection, show operations, as well as several contracts and planning for the venue – Soldier’s and Sailors

Memorial Hall. Because of our several years of experience, we were able to successfully carry through each detail of planning to ensure a successful show. With a \$25,000 budget for the show, we were able to donate over \$7,000 of proceeds to the Homeless Children’s Education fund.

An organization/event is never perfect, and there is always room to grow and learn. It is important to keep that mindset when being involved with something for a long period of time because it drives motivation and personal development. Because I was heavily involved with this

prestigious organization over several years, I was able to develop my skills each year to both improve my personal contribution, as well as bring more to the table for the organization as a whole. I took the lessons from BIB6, and applied them to BIB7. Then, I took the lessons from BIB7 and applied them to BIB8. I also passed down any takeaways to the future directors for BIB9 and BIBX. For example, during BIB6, the board realized that the University of Pittsburgh was a valuable asset to the BIB staff as well as the BIB audience. The following year, we held events at UPitt to get more Pitt students involved with the organization and make it more of a Pittsburgh event, rather than Carnegie Mellon. This proved to be very helpful for us on the weekend of the show, as we had more manpower to run a smooth show. That year, my co-chair and I learned the importance of digital marketing for raising awareness of the show. We also learned that the more incentives an organization could

provide, the more likely people are to participate in awareness efforts. For BIB8, I was able to inform the new PR chairs of these takeaways and set up campaigns to incorporate them. We developed team and campus contests in order to keep the event fresh, even though it was in its eighth year.

During my senior year at CMU, I stepped down from my board positions and acted as an advisor and overseer to the new board. With three years of board experience, I had the most knowledge of the ins and outs of running BIB. Alumni play a very large role in helping new directors with decisions

and obstacles, serving as a strong support system for the new directors. However, for BIB9, the role of BIB alumni slightly changed. The new directors had a unique approach to the show and did not seek out help from us, the alumni. At first, this was very tough, as the new decisions did not align with what was done in the past. There were several times where I felt an urge to step in and provide my two cents. My co-directors and I felt that the show was going to be an absolute disaster without our help. However, we had to accept that it was now out of our hands and trust the new directors,

whom we had selected to run the show. My trust and silence played a key role in helping the new directors explore their creativity, and make the event bigger and better than ever. On the day of the show, I still supported the new board, ready to help with any tasks or issues that arose. I was glad to witness a successful and colorful BIB9, with higher amounts of sponsorship donations and attendance than the past three years.

I look forward to continuing my support for BIB as the planning for BIBX is now in the works. I have full faith in the new board, as they are all very talented and driven individuals. They are fortunate to have 9 years of “BIB do’s and don’ts” ahead of them, but they are also trying to be innovative to make BIBX even grander. Although I will not be physically present on campus, I hope that the new directors will utilize me as a resource in their efforts to make the show the greatest it has ever been.



*Bhangra in the Burgh 8 Co-Directors at Bhangra in the Burgh 9 Team Mixer
Fall 2015*



Part Two: Professional service allows one to experience and explore activities vital to the development of leadership abilities.

CMU Raasta

CMU Raasta is a dance team committed to promoting Indian culture across campus. Through the West Indian folk dance, Garba-Raas, Raasta aims to spread awareness of Gujarati traditions. The Garba-Raas dance style has formed through the joining of two distinct styles: Garba and Raas. These typical Gujarati folk dances are energetic and involve whirling and moving feet and arms in a complicated, choreographed manner.

Raas is performed twirling colorful sticks, called dandiya, while Garba is performed without props. By performing on and off campus at dance competitions throughout the nation, CMU Raasta wishes to exhibit the talent and diversity of Carnegie Mellon students. While Raas originated with 12 beat dandiya lines from festival celebrations, it has evolved for the American stage into a performance characterized by sharp and synced movements by 12-16 dancers, with high energy choreography.



Preparing for Muqabla 2014

highlighting skill and athleticism performed to remixed music. Most teams will perform with a theme, which guides the dance and will incorporate props and a backdrop to communicate a story or idea during the dance. The US circuit typically has 30-40 teams compete each year at bid-point competitions across the country. The top 8 teams receive an invitation to Raas All-Stars (RAS), the national competition held in Houston, TX.

I was exposed to the Garba-Raas circuit while growing up, as I attended competitions at Penn State University as an audience member. I was taken away by the colorful energy and knew it was something that I wanted to do when going to college. I quickly joined the CMU team my freshman year, and got involved as soon as I could. I was able to perform as a competitive dancer at two competitions that year, Muqabla: at the University at Buffalo, and SurvivoRaas: at the University of Connecticut. This was a big achievement for

us because SurvivoRaas was the first competition the team had gotten into that qualified for RAS bid points. Opening the letter of acceptance remains one of my favorite memories in my years on the team.

As it was our first year in the circuit, we struggled with publicity for our team, so a PR chair position was very crucial to our team. Although I was a new member, I was asked to take on this role. As PR chair, I given the opportunity to help with many of our PR materials, for general PR as well as fundraisers and events. I also ran the Facebook and Twitter pages and created an Instagram profile for our team. To date, these pages have remained very active and we have been able to develop a strong following as an established team in the circuit. Halfway through the year, they selected me as the official PR chair of the team. Being the youngest member on a team with a leadership position allowed me to dive into developing my leadership skills. I soon became comfortable with expressing my opinion

on PR-related items, and after some time, I started to contribute to general team decisions as well. I have been able to carry this position forward over the past three years as we continue expanding our social reach. As we started to attend more competitions, we were able to develop more content to publish. In addition, I have been able to learn about social media trends as well as observe more successful teams in the circuit to be able to grow my knowledge and skills and run successful social media. We were also able to develop a website in the following year and to update and edit it as we continue to grow as an organization.

At the start my sophomore year, my captains asked me to become vice-captain. As vice-captain, I improved my logistical and organizational skills to a great extent. Captains and vice captains are expected to help run a team of 20+ members, which involves organizing and leading practices, putting extra hours into setup and cleanup, administrative

duties, developing choreography and formations, and serving as a senior member of the team for new members to look up to. Vice captains are expected to work with the captains to discuss decisions about the competitive season (what competitions to attend, songs to include in the set, themes to showcase, costumes to wear, etc.). This year we attended three competitions, Muqabla: at the University at Buffalo, A-town Showdown: at Georgia Tech University, and Raas Royalty: at Indiana University. After the season, my captains and I took it upon ourselves to become



Performing at A-Town Showdown 2015 - Atlanta, GA



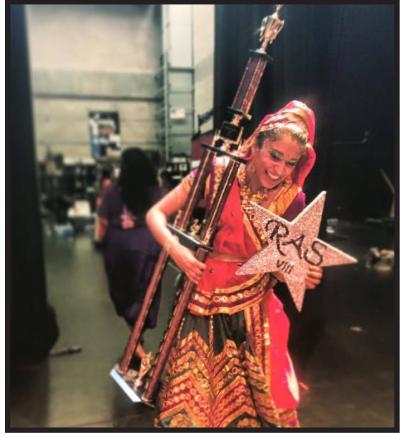
First place win at Dandia Dhamaka 2015 - Ann Arbor, MI

more active in the social realm of the circuit. That summer, we made efforts to meet members from different teams and get CMU's name out there. As leaders of CMU, we pushed our comfort zones and just went for it, trying to meet as many people as possible. In the following year, we had the support of our new friends and also were able to see them throughout the season. This turned out to be a great decision because the friends that I made that summer, as well as the following year, have become some of my closest friends today. Following our lead, my team members have also become much more confident at competition mixers. I was able to see them grow from a small shy CMU team, to proactive members of the competitive Raas circuit.

2014-2015 turned to be a very successful season for CMU Raasta. Three years of hard work finally helped us accomplish our dreams, attending Raas All-Stars. Since our prior season ended pretty early, the executive board started choreography and planning in the spring of 2014 and continued its efforts through the following year. I was selected as a second-year vice captain and was accompanied by an additional vice captain for the year. The team attended three competitions, and because of their success (Two first places and one second place), was ranked third in the nation, qualifying for the national championship in Houston, TX. This has been a personal dream of mine since I attended

my first Raas competition as an audience member in 8th grade. Despite overcoming several obstacles, my team proved to me that anything is possible, as long as you work hard, work passionately, and work together as a family. It was the first set of placings ever in the history of this team, since its establishment in 2012. Because of our success, we were also able to gain tremendous financial support from the Carnegie Mellon community to help us attend the nationals. We also blew the Garba-Raas community away, as an underdog team that they did not expect to be successful. We would not have been able to accomplish this without the strong leadership of my captains, whom I was able to learn many valuable skills from for

the upcoming year. The four of us had a drive to work hard to accomplish something we had always dreamed of. Because we were able to be on the same page, we were able to communicate this goal to the team, and bring them on the same page as well. Each win felt like a collaborative effort that the entire team contributed to. Although we did not place at nationals, being able



Second place win at Raas Rodeo 2016 - Austin, TX

to attend was an honor in and of itself, and a huge stepping-stone for the team's journey.

This past year, I stepped up as one of the co-captains for the team. With the amount of experience I had, I was the most obvious and ideal person for the job. My co-captain and I

were the primary leads for all of the choreography, formations, logistics, finances, costumes, theme prep, and mix for the new season. Because of our success in the prior year, we had gained much recognition for the Carnegie Mellon community and were able to perform at several on-campus events. We successfully brought on 10 new members and attended three competitions. When we thought we had done it all, Raasta was able to stride in greater lengths in its 2015-2016 competitive season. Not only did the team place at all three competitions it attended (One first place and two second places) and ranked 3rd in the national to attend Raas All-Stars a second time, CMU Raasta was crowned as the Raas All-Stars VIII National Champions.

This was an incredible honor, and would not have been possible without my ability, as well as my co-captain's ability, to lead the team on this incredible journey. Our leadership skills were definitely tested, as we had to take into account

several factors for each decision we made. As leaders of the team, we had to be mentally and physically present in and out of every single practice. There are a lot of details that go into running a travelling competitive team, and without proper leadership skills, it would not be possible. I was able to push my personal limits and realize the extent of stress levels I could handle. Throughout the year, my co-captain and I remained the crux of the team - motivating them when they needed it the most, and pushing them to achieve what they thought they could not. We learned several lessons of leadership that were crucial to not only successful performances but also overall happiness of the group that takes us from a team to a family.

An important lesson that we learned as leaders of this team was to not only guiding the team on a path, but stand alongside them on that path as well. We pushed each individual to grow and improve as a dancer, but also pushed ourselves to perform at our best. We



Winning performance at Raas All-Stars VIII The National Championship - Houston TX

can both proudly say that our final performance is something that we are incredibly proud of. In addition, all successful leaders are able to listen to their followers. Not one decision was made without majority agreement from the team. This includes decisions about theme incorporation, as well as which competitions to attend (taking into account money, location, and fun factor), what our team chants are, t-shirt designs, etc. This allowed everyone to feel included and made the final product relatable for each member that contributed to it. Because of this connectivity, the team's passion shined through in our dance, and we were able to perform at a level

that many other teams could not.

Through my experience with Raasta, I also learned that in order to get desired results, leaders need to be extremely passionate about their causes. Passion is what drives motivation, and leaders are the people who will put in the grunt work, even if it is on their own, in order to complete a product or activity. If my co-captain and I were not passionate about Raas, we would not force ourselves to stay up till 4am on consecutive nights to finish the choreography for a song, or paint our props to perfection. Because of passion, we pushed our limits, and we did it together. In electing

next year's leaders, we picked the members who we thought would do the same thing at the end of the day.

Part of being a leader is also following. We not only had three years of takeaways to draw from, but for the first time, we had an alumni network that we could utilize during the season. Throughout the year, my co-captain and I were in constant touch with our alumni – asking them about decisions we were unsure of, and also accepting their advice and opinion on the decisions we were making. It was tough to align their vision for the team with our personal vision, but a balance was found that made the team the best that it could be. We openly listened to any advice that was given to us and considered it heavily in all the decisions we made. At the same time, we stuck to our gut because as leaders of the team, it was our decision to take the team in the direction that we had hoped for.

The toughest part about being the captain



*CMU Raasta End of the Year Photoshoot
Spring 2016*

of CMU Raasta was separating professional life with personal life. I had to work hard to ensure to the team that outside of practices and competitions, I was their friend, and not their captain. I was especially able to notice it this year because almost half of the team consisted of new members, mostly freshmen. With so many friendships to form, there is also a lot of respect to gain. As a leader of CMU Raasta,

I found myself having to put in extra effort to maintain personal friendships with my team members, establishing trust and closeness. I soon realized that after this was established, our professional relationship as team members also improved. This is because we were able to gain respect for each other, as well as connect on a different level, which smoothed our experiences in a team setting. It is important for

leaders to connect with their followers. Then, their followers will feel that their leaders are genuine and trustworthy, and be more willing to strongly support them.

As leaders today, we are also to train the leaders of tomorrow. From the start of the school year, my co-captain and I were seeking individuals who we thought had the same drive and passion to carry this team forward

after our term was over. Some people are innate leaders, and we definitely saw that. These were the members that gravitated towards the front of the team, were participating in discussions and asking questions, and assisted with tasks outside of practices. However, other leaders are born leaders, and we worked hard to encourage all members of the team, whether new or returning, to take on more responsibilities and become leaders. One does not need to be extroverted to be a leader. Some of our strongest leaders are quiet, and do much more thinking than talking. We were able to see this in some of our new members, and took it upon ourselves to encourage them to become involved in the team decisions. Because of this, it was the first year the so many new members were actively involved in the team. Not only did they work hard to be better dancers, but they also spend several hours out of practices helping with props and production, costumes, logistics, and choreography. Our faith was restored in the team,

and we were able to feel like the team would continue to grow and strive, even after we left. This was my most successful accomplishment as the leader of the CMU Raasta. It was not winning the national championship – it was creating new leaders in those younger than me that would grow and take the team to even greater heights.

Part Three: Professional Service helps one to develop networks of high social capital value

My experiences with internships have been the most “professional” activity of professional service throughout my college experience. I have had the opportunity to intern at three companies, Dakorum (d.b.a. SNOWE), Digital Firefly Marketing, and Agency 1903. All of these experiences have allowed me to network with different types of professionals in the marketing world, allowing me to expand my horizons, as well as become comfortable with my professional self.

Dakorum

In the summer after my sophomore year, I did an unpaid internship at a startup home decor company, Dakorum, in New York City. At Dakorum, I was able to work closely with the



Summer internship at Dakorum

founders, the creative director, and a co-intern to brainstorm the product launch that was set for the upcoming year. I created a social media and analytics strategy to build brand awareness and increase engagement, molding the company's pioneer marketing launch in 2015. I also successfully spearheaded and conducted competitor analyses of



Digital Firefly Marketing Team

social impact strategy, packaging options, and customer referral programs, gaining insight on leading trends in the home decor industry.

The founders of the company were Wharton grads, who had several connections with different startups/entrepreneurs that sprung from their class. Throughout the summer, I was invited to several events that allowed me to network with young professionals in New York City. I networked with the founders of Common Bond, Baublebar, Fahrenheit 212, and also got a tour of the GILT office and Saks Fifth Ave Home Department. Each

of these events was a little different, and allowed me to meet new people in different ways. The GILT and Saks tours were more organized, as the representatives from the respective companies took us through the office/floor and explained different aspects of the business. It was nice to get a private tour because we were able to ask any questions that came to mind, without feeling uncomfortable. The Common Bond event was happy hour for a USA World Cup match. In a more casual setting, I was able to meet other NYC summer interns, as well as some Wharton grads that were in the startup industry. The Fahrenheit 212 was a lunch event

with another company, Baublebar. Both Dakorum and Baublebar were Wharton startups, so together the two teams went to the Fahrenheit 212 office to learn about the firm. This event was a life-changing experience for me because it opened my eyes and helped me decide my desired career path, a job at a marketing agency. Fahrenheit 212 is a global innovation strategy and design firm. The consultants from the firm took us through their innovation brainstorm process to explain a typical project with a client. This type of work fascinated me, as I loved the idea of starting a project from scratch, creating something new and interesting, and starting all over again with the lessons I learned.

Digital Firefly Marketing

Using the takeaways from Dakorum, I focused my efforts into finding an internship at a marketing agency the next summer. I landed a job at Digital Firefly Marketing, in Princeton, NJ, and little did I know that the summer ahead would

be the most fast-paced and fulfilling learning experience I had ever had. The company was small, one CEO, three managers, and two social media assistants. Tasks were given to me from all branches of the company - accounting, SEO, social media, email marketing, design, sales, auditing, website development, the list goes on. Specifically, I constructed my own projects to create content calendars and board covers for Pinterest accounts, including Food Network's Paula Deen, in order to increase brand awareness and followers (+51% viewers, +470% impressions). I also regularly created and curated social media content for several clients, seeing an increase in Facebook impressions, as well as conducted 15 search engine optimization audits for potential clients, 5 of which became company projects.

One thing I appreciated most about my experience at Digital Firefly was how much everyone encouraged my participation in each and every aspect of this

company. As the only intern in the office, there was never a time where I felt like I did not have enough work to do, or that the work I was doing was unimportant. The assignments continued to pile on my desk and at times I did feel very overwhelmed, but in a good way. On weekday evenings and weekend nights, I found myself wanting to log on and finish my tasks, because they were simply fun for me to do. The amount of work that was given to me showed me how much my boss and coworkers trusted me. This allowed me to comfortably ask them any questions I had about my assignments, as well as ask for more work when I felt like I could handle it. They were able to see my passion, and thus challenged me even more. One of my last projects at the company actually had me deal with my own client, an esteemed English professor and instructor affiliated with Princeton University and the local high schools. I had the opportunity to work with an old friend of the CEO, to edit and refine her website. I met with

her a few times, set my own work schedule for that project, and closed the project all on my own. This was definitely tough, as she had very high expectations for me, and I was only an intern. However, I was able to communicate effectively and finish the project to her approval. Because of this, I now have a contact in the Princeton area that I can reach out to for more work, or even assistance with anything related to her profession.

Because of my great experience at Digital Firefly Marketing, today I am able to reach out to my coworkers, as well as my boss, for recommendation letters as well as networking. In fact, one of the SEO managers put me in touch with a contact that was working at an advertising agency in New York City. He got a feel for my interested and work ethic and helped me push that forward to a potential career. I also feel more confident in my professional abilities and have learned how to market myself and my skills. I am to use these skills and assets I gained from my internship in my

coursework and present internship.

Agency 1903

In my last semester at CMU, I was only taking three classes. I decided to pursue my off days in a part-time internship at a downtown Pittsburgh marketing agency and further develop my professional portfolio. At Agency 1903, I assisted and managed content for Wordpress website projects, as well as created wireframes for potential client websites. I also helped to brainstorm, create, and execute social media marketing campaigns for a high-end cycling wear retailer, as well as conducted customer profile research to determine effective marketing strategies. It was definitely tough balancing schoolwork and a part-time job, as my expectations from work were that of a full-time employee. However, I enjoyed my projects and continued to learn more about the marketing agency world. Although I was only physically in the office twice a week, I found myself taking my work laptop home on weekends to make more progress on my projects and make the

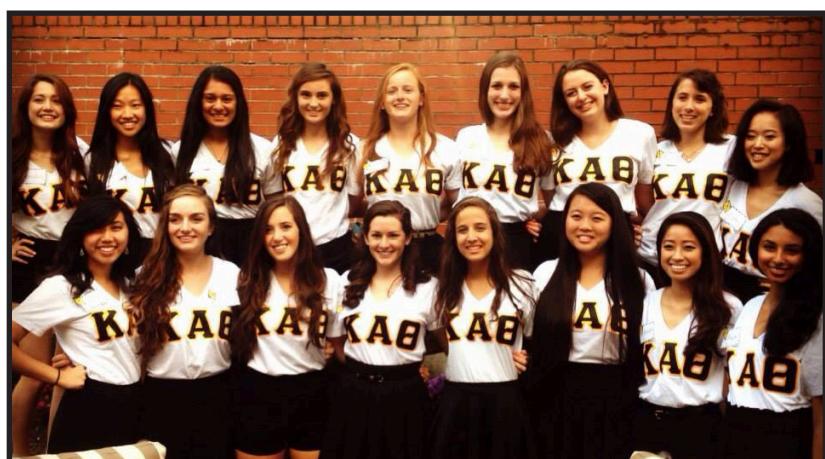
most out of my time with the company. During my internship, I had the ability to do real work with real clients. I was also able to sit in on conference calls and communicate directly with the clients to complete tasks. I appreciated that my coworkers trusted me with the responsibility. The leadership at Agency 1903 is a group of individuals I hope to stay in touch with as I advance from Pittsburgh to start my post-grad journey. They have taught me a lot about how to work with higher-end clients, which is what I hope to do moving forward.



Part Four: Professional Service promotes greater awareness of the role that community involvement and social responsibility plays in professional life

Kappa Alpha Theta

Greek life is an integral part of Carnegie Mellon culture, allowing students to focus on their personal development through leadership, service, academics, and more. I joined Kappa Alpha Theta as a freshman, and was immediately inspired by the senior members of the organization and their accomplishments in academic, extracurricular, and professional settings. I was fortunate to have been exposed to many opportunities of professional service that allowed me to gain a better perspective of the Carnegie Mellon and Greater Pittsburgh communities and the role that we have in them. My membership with Kappa Alpha Theta



Kappa Alpha Theta Recruitment 2013

has inspired me to push myself to my limits and be the best I can be. It has also provided me with the chance to impact and help others around me, which is difficult for many college students. At Carnegie Mellon, many students fall succumb to the competitive academic culture and become stuck in that environment. Greek and service organizations give students an opportunity to make a difference in the community around them; keeping perspectives clear of the world around us and the challenges that our community goes through on a daily basis.

Greek Sing

My first real involvement with Theta was during my spring semester of my freshman year. Greek Sing is Carnegie Mellon's largest Greek philanthropy event. Every spring the fraternity and sorority community team up to create, choreograph, direct, and perform 13-minute musicals to raise money for a designated philanthropy. Awards are



*Greek Sing 2013 with Delta Tau Delta
Catch Me If You Can*

given to the best shows in both the singles and doubles categories, with the ultimate prize going to the house that raises the most money for the philanthropy.

This experience was one of the most memorable of my first year at Carnegie Mellon. I felt honored to be a part of an organization that was so passionate about a good cause. I also learned the importance of teamwork and sisterhood when trying to put on a great show. We were fortunate to take home the 2nd place prize that night. In 2010, the Greek community partnered with an extremely worthy local cause, The

Children's Institute of Pittsburgh, with a goal of raising \$150,000 in four years. In 2012, the Greek Community was able to raise \$56,000 for this cause and in 2013, the Greek community raised \$74,000. The goal was exceeded in 2014. Starting in 2015, Greek Sing has promised to raise \$100,000 for Our Clubhouse Pittsburgh, an organization that provides support to anyone touched by cancer.

It is amazing how a group of passionate students are able to come together and put on a colorful evening for a great cause. Greek students spend almost the entire first half of the spring semester trying to raise money for Greek Sing, as well as practicing hard during weekday nights on top of schoolwork and other extracurricular activities to put on a good performance. Greek Sing not only allows us to raise money for a good cause, but also to come together as a Greek community. We get the opportunity to pair with a different fraternity each year, and the friendship that

develop are truly special. Also, the community as a whole because very supportive during this time of year, as members of each organization attend and participate in each other's fundraising efforts.

100oplus

100oplus is a Carnegie Mellon day of service. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni have an opportunity to positively impact the greater Pittsburgh community by engaging in service efforts at multiple volunteer sites throughout the greater Pittsburgh area. I was a part of the Kappa Alpha Theta group that volunteered at the Hosanna House, cleaning up the outdoor property to prepare for the summer camp for underprivileged and underserved youth of

Wilkinsburg, PA. I have continued to participate in 1000+ every year. W

The event has grown over the past four years, as it is now held once a semester rather than once a year. I always look forward to not only bonding with my sisters, but also getting out the Pittsburgh city and serving areas and people that are not as fortunate as us Carnegie Mellon students. The staff at Hosanna House is always very kind, as they usually work with us while we are doing the cleaning work. I always look forward to going back each year to that same site as I have seen it flourish over the years.

I also had the opportunity to volunteer with the Pittsburgh 5k Half-Marathon through 100oplus. The annual race

brings in over 30,000 runners from all over the U.S., as well as 100 supporting charities. I helped the committee set up barricades for the event, as well as stood alongside the streets to cheer the runners on as they passed me. I was surprised to see runners of all ages, from 5 to 75. Although this act of service may seem non-impactful, I could tell by the smiles on the runners faces that they appreciated the support. The feedback from them also motivated me to keep cheering people on, as it was very cold and rainy.

Booth

My experience with booth during Spring Carnival was a pivotal point in my involvement with Theta. Booth is one of the biggest showpieces of Spring Carnival.

Student organizations build multi-story structures around our annual theme (2013: Fractured Fairytales), hosting interactive games and elaborate decorations. These booths are meant for children and families of the Pittsburgh community to explore



100oplus at Hosanna House with Sigma Chi



Thumbelina's Enchanted Garden Booth 2013

during the famous Spring Carnival weekend.

Theta's theme was Thumbelina's Enchanted Garden. Although I did not have a room chair position, I spent many hours preparing our booth. I was able to make many special connections with my fellow sisters, as we stayed up through countless nights working as hard as we good in order to have a beautiful final product. The most memorable part was the all-night I pulled the night before the booth was to be finished. I remember watching the sunrise as we placed our giant flowers on our garden, like the sun was helping the bloom. I had tears in my eyes looking at our final product. We made it

from scratch, together. I learned the importance of sisterhood and teamwork – relying on each other through the rough times and the celebratory times. I became attached to our structure as I volunteered my time to lead extra tour shifts through our booth. Again, we were fortunate to take home the 2nd place prize for best sorority booth that year.

I continued to be heavily involved in booth in my sophomore and junior years with Theta. We took the first place prize both years with Pirates' of the Caribbean and Wizard of Oz themes. Booth has always allowed me to appreciate the importance of sisterhood and working for a common goal. It is always rewarding to see the excited faces of children as they walk through our structure with wide imaginations, touching the colorful handmade objects around them. Essentially, the purpose of building the booth is not to win a prize, but to bring a smile to the children of the Greater Pittsburgh community, and seeing those smiles has been one of my

most proud memories at Carnegie Mellon.

Membership Development Committee

In the fall of my sophomore year, I was elected to represent my class for the Membership Development committee. I was able to service as a sounding board member for concerns and suggestions from my academic class. I also attended regular meetings in order to emphasize a positive member development program into the chapter, emphasizing sisterhood and member recognition, and excellence in both individual and group settings. The Membership Development committee oversees any disciplinary issues that may arise in the chapter as well. I also served as a peer that sisters could go to in difficult or stressful times.

As a part of MDC, I stood as a bridge between sisters in the chapter and the executive board that runs the organization. Anyone with any issues or concerns was able to confide in me as I

helped communicate those concerns to higher levels of the org. In a professional setting, it is important to be seen as a trustworthy leader when in a position of high rank. Those who report to you should be able to comfortably express any concerns they may have, without fearing rejection. The best leaders are those who listen as well, and truly portray that they have the best interest of the company or followers in mind when making decisions. MDC taught me how to balance this trustworthiness while ensuring that the chapter also abided to the standards and bylaws set before them.

Shadyside Boys & Girls Club

Kappa Alpha Theta also organizes monthly visits to the Boys' and Girls' Club of Western Pennsylvania with members of another Greek Organization. These trips not only gave me a chance to give back to the community, but also allowed me to meet other members of Greek life that shared the same passions as I did. The



Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Western Pennsylvania provide tutoring and homework help, computer training, sports, fitness and recreation, arts programs, summer programming, and safe place to go after school. Through the programs, the children are able to gain confidence by developing a sense of competence, usefulness, positive influence and belonging.

Volunteering at the Boys' and Girls' club always gave me a sense of fulfillment. I have always loved interacting with younger children, and I was able to do this on a regular basis. In my experiences at the club I

was able to help kids with their homework, assist them with arts and crafts, play basketball, and teach them how to use computers. I appreciate Theta for giving me the opportunity to act a mentor to the children of the Boys' and Girls Club.

CASA

Kappa Alpha Theta's national philanthropy is Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), a nonprofit network, which advocates for abused and neglected children and finds them safe, permanent homes. With a CASA, the average time a foster child spends in courtrooms is decreased by half to two years, allowing the child to be adopted into a loving family at a much quicker rate. However, to fund a child costs around \$1,000 dollars, and CASA receives more than half of its budget from donations.

At CMU, Theta holds a variety of events such as Zumba for CASA, CASA Superhero 5k, and Thetathon (a dance marathon style showcase of some of CMU's diverse and incredible talent), in

an effort to raise money and awareness for our philanthropy. It was wonderful to be able to host and participate in these events knowing that our hard work and efforts were going to an external cause. During the CASA 5k, we travelled to an external site and helped CASA run the 5k events. Some of our sisters ran the marathon, while others helped with the children's games. I will never forget the look on the kids' faces when they finished the race in their super hero costumes, or were able to enjoy a beautiful day of sunshine and family-friendly activities.

This year, we were able to have a CASA representative come into one our chapter meetings to explain the organization a bit more. It was great to get a better perspective on a philanthropy we were putting many hours and monetary efforts towards. We were also able to ask any questions about the organization and brainstorm additional ways in which we could help. It is great that we are able to have a

relationship with the local CASA organization and put a face to the cause. I hope that in the future years, Theta is able to stay connected to the CASA representatives and hopefully organize more events towards the cause.

Recruitment Counselor

For Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 recruitment, I decided to be a Greek Life Recruitment Counselor. RCs are sisters who temporarily disaffiliate from their chapters in order to help potential new members through the recruitment process.

I was chosen as one of thirty Panhellenic women in a community of about 500 to serve as a counselor,

confidant, and recruiter through Fall recruitment. As a counselor, I lead a group of girls through the formal membership recruitment process. I faced several challenges that required quick problem solving skills to work through a variety of situations.

Being a recruitment counselor broadened my perspective and appreciation for the Greek community at Carnegie Mellon. Because I was disaffiliated, I was completely unbiased towards my own sorority, and I worked alongside 29 other women to advocate for the Greek community as a whole. I was able to connect with these women based on our common values, and



Formal Membership Recruitment - Fall 2015
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I soon realized that all of our organizations were essentially the same. Through a reflection process, I was able to connect with my core values and remember why I loved being a part of the Greek community. This allowed me to recruitment women into the community, as I was able to spread my passion for Greek Life, and answer any questions or address any concerns they may have had. I was able to form a close bond with the women in my group as I helped them through the process, and I was happy to see them join the Greek community by the end of it. To date, I am proud to see my recruitment group members as active members of the Greek community.

Scholarship Director

In the spring of 2015, I was slated as the scholarship director for my chapter. Through my position, I have been able to further develop my leadership, mentoring, as well as organizational skills. As director, my responsibilities included giving weekly reports to the chapter about scholastic advice and opportunities at Carnegie

Mellon and developing a support system for sisters in need of academic help and regularly follow up with their action plans. I also helped to improve chapter GPA through programs and initiatives such as weekly study hours, job fair workshops and resume reviews, class registration events, and a once-a-semester Scholarship Banquet that honored high-achieving sisters as well as gave sisters a chance to connect with professors and CMU faculty.

Although my efforts as scholarship director did not affect the Greater Pittsburgh community, I still felt that these were acts of service that benefitted the sisters of Kappa Alpha Theta. As an academic mentor, several sisters were able to reach out to me seeking academic advice, time management advice, or just college advice in general. I created new programs to help sisters become aware of each other's majors and seek help. I also spread the word about academic counseling at CMU, and gave sisters the confidence to take

upon those opportunities that are provided to us as students. was able to set up tutoring programs for several sisters. I believe that I had the social responsibility of serving as a role model to my fellow sisters, which encouraged me to keep my personal academics at a high standard as well.

Order of Omega

Order of Omega is an honor fraternity that recognizes juniors and seniors who have exemplified high standards in the areas of scholarship, leadership, and involvement within their respective organization and within the Greek, campus, and local community. Members are selected from the top 3% of students at each institution. To date, over 500 chapters have been chartered throughout North America, each sharing the common goal of recognizing the many outstanding student leaders at their institution.

In my experience with the organization I have had the opportunity to

volunteer at Carnegie Mellon's semester Almost Midnight Breakfast during finals week. This is a tradition in which CMU professors and staff provide breakfast for students as a study break, as well as networking opportunity. It is always nice to see professors outside of classroom settings, supporting the students in their study efforts. Order of Omega is in charge of the logistics for the event, something that a regular student would not have the opportunity to become involved in.

Conclusion

It is important to keep the perspective professional service and development while experiencing the academic and extracurricular aspects of college. Carnegie Mellon is a unique place in which driven individuals from all over the world come together to figure out how to make the world a better place. Through Bhangra in the Burgh, CMU Raasta, marketing internships, and Kappa Alpha Theta, I have been able grow me knowledge and skills in several different areas. I have also learned key lessons of being a leader, and look forward to utilizing them in my future career path. My experiences with these organizations have also allowed me to develop strong professional networks, which I will continue to use as I seek job opportunities in the marketing field, whether it be for landing a job or getting recommendations and advice. Finally, my involvement in these organizations has showed me the importance of professional service, community involvement, and making the world around me as better place as I better myself as well.



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