

## **What is Evaluation?**

### **PSU Brownbag**

**March 14, 2007**

The following information explains what these program evaluators do for work, and the recommendations they have for a career in evaluation.

#### **Michelle Solloway**

Michelle has typically worked with non-profit organizations

Michelle works for a state-wide mental health service

Michelle mentions that it is difficult to be hired by the state as an evaluator because many state organizations do not think it's needed

Michelle uses logic models in her work

Michelle mentions that it is difficult to craft agenda across different areas of an organization

Michelle mentions the need to hire students for summer internships

Michelle mentions there is a difference between contracting as an independent consultant versus working as an evaluator within a work environment

Michelle states you must develop good relationships with people in the organization to achieve solid data

#### **Katie McDonald**

Katie has a Ph.D. in community psychology

Research experience is important!

Students should know that program evaluation has its own theoretical framework and tools

Katie recommends that students volunteer in the program evaluation field (the AEA conference is coming up in the fall)

For the research experience, ask to evaluate something for free

For more experience, work with someone with more experience than you to understand the business more

Katie is teaching program evaluation now because she thinks there are not enough opportunities for students to learn about program evaluation in an academic setting

A student asked what type of academic training should students receive.

Response: any discipline can bring something important to program evaluation. Of particular importance: psychology, business, public policy, philosophy, systems science, health and people skills are important

Another student asked if a Masters degree is enough.

Response: Yes!

### **Dereck Reinke**

Dereck works for city officials

Dereck was a psychology major as an undergrad

Dereck actually went to a Research & Evaluation graduate program

Dereck worked for the Department of Consumer & Business Sources

Topics of concern: building codes, work safety

Dereck uses a lot of performance measure – tracking system

Dereck conducts a lot of survey research

Dereck uses cost-benefit analysis frequently

Dereck has also done work reviewing the police department

Topic example: use of force by police officers on arrestees

Dereck recommends getting as much statistical training as possible

When searching for jobs don't always search under the title "evaluation". Also, search "research analyst".