FSU Communication Studies Major Builds Relationship between Mountainside Community Mediation Center and Residence Life Office

Frostburg, MD, May 19, 2012- Frostburg State University (FSU) Senior Bryan Rice completed his Communication Studies Capstone experience in the form of a 3-credit practicum this Spring in the university’s Communication Studies Department under the mentorship of Department Chair Dr. Elesha L. Ruminski. Rice, who is a Communication Studies major minoring in Leadership Studies and Psychology, is also a third year resident assistant helping residents in residence halls on FSU’s campus. He is a Sloop Institute for Excellence in Leadership and Generating Opportunities for Leadership Development (GOLD) graduate. Rice was also inducted into the Communication Studies honors society, Lambda Pi Eta. Rice served for two years as the vice president of the Student Communication Studies Association (SCSA). He is from Lusby, MD, and is the son of Stephen and Trudy Rice.

The Communication Studies Practicum is the cumulating experience of the Communication Studies Major and is either a 3-credit practicum or a 12 or 15 credit internship experience with an approved organizational setting. In his Capstone experience, Rice worked alongside his site supervisor, Ms. Lori Senese, program coordinator of Mountainside Community Mediation Center (MCMC), to act as a liaison between MCMC and FSU’s Residence Life Office (RLO). Rice focused on promoting the mediation center as a resource to resident assistants (RAs). He attended multiple meetings with Residence Life staff and MCMC members to get feedback and support in the creation of a mediation referral form to be used to bring in more FSU students to the mediation center. The overall goal was to encourage students at FSU to utilize the free service that the mediation center provides as residents deal with conflicts in the residence halls.

While serving as the liaison between the two organizations, Rice attended monthly meetings with the mediation board of directors, provided monthly status updates in regards to RLO, and promoted the mediation center to other FSU resources such as Residence Life and Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO). Throughout the Capstone experience, Rice was responsible for helping to promote the mediation center by selling raffle tickets in the Lane University Center in order to raise money for the non-profit organization.” He also worked closely with Senese in assisting with grant writing to help support the mediation center.

Rice also helped facilitate all three of the Sustaining Campus and Community Dialogue Series that FSU initiated to help the campus and the surrounding communities cope with recent violent acts on and off campus. The dialogue series focused on various FSU stakeholders coming together to keep the conversation going regarding differences and conflicts in the community through various dialogue sessions facilitated by students, community members, and FSU staff members. Rice developed relationships with the two main dialogue facilitators, Dr. Frank Dukes and Dr. Marvin Johnson, to help ensure populations were evenly distributed in discussion groups. Through the Communication Studies Conflict Management class, Rice helped give a presentation called “Closing the Gap: Creating a More Peaceful Frostburg,” which was supported by the Campus and Community Dialogue Series and Mountainside Community Mediation Center, and addressed campus and community disconnect in Frostburg and how to combat this issue.

Under Ruminski’s mentoring, Rice has been able to apply concepts and theories learned from previous courses into the Capstone experience. Rice states, “Dr. Ruminski has been one of my biggest supporters all four years here at FSU. It has been a blessing to have helped support a growing organization with a practical need on this campus, but the bigger blessing has been able to see how much growth I have had between the time that I started the Communication Studies major to now. I constantly thank and give credit to the faculty and staff of the Communication Studies Department for being a second family to me while away at school.” Ruminski says, “Bryan has acted as a true ‘servant leader,’ one who serves others, always thinking of their needs before his own to help the greater good, in this case, to help us build awareness and involvement with MCMC and the dialogue series in Frostburg. He cares deeply about this community and university. I am proud of him as he graduates this year, but he will be missed.”

For more information on the Communication Studies major at FSU, contact Ruminski at 301-6874480 or elruminski@frostburg.edu. The newsletter and information about the major can be found at the Department’s website at http://www.frostburg.edu/dept/cmst/.

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