

CAWS Teacher Exchange Narrative – Jennifer Carmack

On my Teacher Exchange this summer, I spent part of my time at Wallace State Community College and another part at Epsco Staffing. As I began my 3 days at Wallace alongside fellow Teacher Exchange participant Sharon Wilborn, I wasn't sure that I would learn too much. I knew all about Wallace, right? Many of my students attend Wallace and I've been there numerous times...to cheer on our basketball team during tournaments, to congratulate our seniors at graduation, to bring our students to career fairs. I then came to realize that what I knew about Wallace revolved around Tom Drake Coliseum.

The next 3 days was a whirlwind. I learned things that I didn't even realize I didn't know. I visited 17 different departments and talked to many more people as I began to understand that our local community college is so much more than what I thought it was.

One of the first things we learned about was all of the opportunities available to students, and incoming students, to be coached for success. Between High School Career Coaching, Talent Search, Career Exploration, and Success Coaching, there is no reason any student should not have a support system as they travel throughout high school and college. The coaches within these programs are constantly available to students and help them with much more than advisement about how to apply for financial aid.

On the academic side, we visited the Business and Math Departments. We also visited some of the technical departments: Machining, Robotics and Electronics, Engineering Technology (formerly known as Drafting), Cosmetology, and Culinary. We were introduced to many of the Health Programs and were also able to speak with people about Adult Education, the Prior Learning Assessment, E-Portfolios, and the Advanced Visualization Center. Considering I took so many things away from this experience at Wallace, I'll condense them into what I thought were the most important things for my students to know:

- There are numerous opportunities to earn college credit for free. You can even get credit for certain life experiences.
- Help is available (to get a job, apply for financial aide, be tutored, etc.). Use it!
- Math and English skills are necessary for almost any job.
- Do your homework before committing to a major so you don't waste time and money.
- There is a great market for minority students (race and gender) in engineering and machining.
- The Nursing facility is amazing and state-of-the-art!

I also spent 2 days at Epsco Staffing. I was unsure about what really happened at a staffing agency (other than the obvious finding jobs for people). It turns out that the people at Epsco each wear numerous hats every day.

I began my day by talking to the Office Manager, Nancy Lyons. Nancy gave me an overview about Epsco: the goal of a staffing agency (to get people full-time jobs), some of the companies that they partner with (Rehau,

Topre, Yutaka, etc.), and how competitive the job market is. Lybia Covington, the Branch Manager/District Sales Manager, then explained some of the things that I never thought that a staffing agency would do: takes employees who have been injured on the job to the hospital (no matter what time it is), counsels employees who acquired too many probation period points and didn't get full time jobs, educates people on how to be good employees, socializes with heads of companies and offers incentives to keep a positive working relationship. As stated previously about my experience with Wallace, I learned too much to talk about in one narrative! The following items are the things my students most need to know from my Epsco Staffing experience:

- First impressions are everything! Don't show up to an interview (at the workplace or the staffing agency) in a hat, flip flops, or pajamas.
- Get your high school diploma or GED, otherwise, you are very limited and will have to do the heavy labor, dirty jobs that no one else wants.
- Taking tech classes in high school is an incentive for industries to hire you.
- Any kind of work experience looks good on your resume, so don't have major gaps in your work history.
- Don't burn bridges. Competition is tough and you won't get a second chance if you don't make it through a business' very strict probationary period.
- Time management is important. Don't be at work on time, be there a little early. It makes you look more eager to work and dependable.
- If you have committed a felony, you won't get a job. If you have a misdemeanor, you still might not get one.
- Anything you put on social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) can be seen by anyone, even your employer.

Overall, this summer I learned and grew professionally and personally by participating in the CAWS Teacher Exchange for the third time. Although some of the things I took away are things I've often told my students (First impressions are everything!), I have more respect now for those real-world workers each time I participate in this program. It's very true that there are some things that you can't teach without personally experiencing them. And I now believe that I will be able to help my students more by knowing a little more about what they will face in the future.