

Kim Burleson

C.A.W.S. Narrative

Wallace State College and Quality Staffing Solutions

Week: 6/16/14-6/20/14

I am blessed to have been given the opportunity to participate in the CAWS Education Exchange Program. This was my first time to participate in this amazing experience. I can honestly say that it was one of the most valuable learning experiences of my entire 17 year career. My experience at Wallace State College and Quality Staffing Solutions gave me a clear insight into the education, skills, character, and discipline needed to be a successful college student and industry employee.

During my one week exchange, I spent Monday through Wednesday at Wallace State Community College and spent the remaining two days at Quality Staffing Solutions, Inc. While at Wallace State, I spent a good bit of my time with the success coaches and the career coaches. What an experience! The excitement and passion that these coaches possess for their jobs and their students is certainly contagious.

The success coaches met with me and provided a description of the many facets of their jobs. The success coaches help students to set educational and career goals and coach them in using plans and strategies to achieve their goals. The tools which are learned through success coaching help students to create a foundation for success in college and in life. As I learned the tools which the success coaches use with their college students, I reflected on ways which the same tools could be implemented in the high school setting to help our students to be successful with their academic and personal goals.

The career coaches are such a valuable asset to our area high school students. They meet with students in grades 9-12, on a regular basis, in an effort to prepare them for college or the workforce. They administer various assessments to determine which careers match the students' skills and interest. They also provide job shadowing experiences for our students and help them to develop a plan with the steps needed to achieve their goals. I had the opportunity to collaborate with my high school's career coach, Brenda Johnson. We discussed ways in which our administration and staff can better support her as she leads our students to successfully plan for their future.

While at Wallace State, I also had the pleasure of touring different departments and meeting with several instructors. I was so impressed by their passion for their job, the accountability for their students' success, and their excitement to share their program and their students' achievements. I very much appreciate the time in which each

Wallace State instructor and staff member took to meet with me. We discussed everything from course requirements to skills needed in order for high school students to be prepared, successful college students.

Thursday and Friday, I was paired with Quality Staffing Solutions. Mike Donaldson, Ira Marcum, and the entire Quality Staffing staff were great. I am grateful for their kindness and hospitality. I appreciate their willingness to explain each step of the hiring process, the soft skills needed to be a successful employee, and the various careers available in Cullman's growing industry.

Thursday, Ira Marcum allowed me to get a first-hand look at interviews with potential employees. I learned some valuable tips for helping our students to present themselves effectively at interviews. Friday, Mike Donaldson took me around to several of the local industries to allow me to observe the day to day operations of such businesses. While at Quality Staffing Solutions, I had the pleasure of touring I-Core, Lufkin, and Topre. The employees at each of these industries took great pride in their jobs and worked well as a team to get the job done and produce a top quality product.

I took away such valuable information from my experiences at Wallace State College and Quality Staffing. I learned the importance of ensuring that our students set personal and educational goals, develop quality oral communications skills, learn responsibility, and acquire new technology skills which are vital to today's job market. Therefore, I will concentrate my efforts on partnering with Cold Springs High School's career coach, Brenda Johnson, to guide our students in developing a four year plan which will aid in setting goals and planning the proper path to ensure the success of those goals.