

Merced College Office Technology Students Put Their Knowledge Into Practice

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Farm Saelee knows Microsoft Word, Excel, and a host of other computer software programs. The 23-year old Merced College student can create and design office stationary, type and print out letters of correspondence, and keep a database of records. She just needed a job so that she could put her knowledge and skills into practice. That's when local Executive Edge Insurance Services came into the picture.

Executive Edge is one of a handful of local businesses who accept Merced College students as interns in their offices. The students are enrolled in the College's Office Technology program as administrative office professional interns.

"We are a brand new insurance agency in Merced and we needed to hire someone immediately," said owner and broker Terrie Bolyard. "Being a brand new agency, we didn't have a lot of money to hire someone. Then, someone told us about Farm. I'm glad we hired her. She's very dedicated."

According to instructor Susan Kline, the interns work 120 hours during their last semester of the program. "This on-the-job experience is the capstone of our program," Kline said. "We want our students to stay near their homes and work in the office setting of their choice." Sheryll Mendiola is another intern who is working in a local doctor's office. Her duties include billing and insurance. Because she came into the office with computer skills, she has already made improvements in the billing process.

"I was asked to tally up the patients who hadn't made payments and they expected that I would write down everyone's name and their information," Mendiola said. "I suggested that we create a spreadsheet in Excel. That way we could keep accurate records and better manage the information."

That kind of immediate impact on the office was also demonstrated by intern Yadira Morales. Morales was recently given an award by her employer Rascal Creek Physical Therapy for her "hard work and dedication."

"This is a great opportunity for us, to have students here with the skills we need," said Morales's supervisor Tony Hernandez. "We've used ROP students in the past, but they are only here for a few hours. And, their knowledge and work ethic is just different from a college student's. A college student is more enthusiastic about working, and they want to do a good job."

The Office Technology program at Merced College prepares students to enter an office environment with the professional skills necessary to be successful. Students learn how to prepare for an interview and how to write a resume. They learn typical office protocols, communication skills, and how to dress professionally. According to Kline, the interns put into practice the knowledge and skills they learn in the classroom.

“We believe that we are training the best administrative office professionals in our region,” she said. “Our employers are grateful for our interns and many employers hire them once they complete the program.

Kline said she invites local businesses to contact her if they are interested in hiring an intern. Interns often work free during the program, but many are paid directly by the employer.

For more information on the Office Technology program, call the Merced College Business Division at (209) 3384-6120.