

## HR Consulting Initiative continues to have impact here, abroad

[WCU Administrator](#) > November 28, 2018 > The Reporter

Housed in Western Carolina University's Department of Human Services, the Human Resources Program's Consulting Initiative once again has made an important impact on local communities and abroad, said Marie-Line Germain, WCU associate professor of human resources and leadership.

During the 2018 spring and fall semesters, more than 90 graduate students in the [Master of Science in Human Resources Program](#) provided pro bono human resources consultation services to organizations around the country, entirely online. That activity was part the students' work in online consulting courses taught by Germain and assistant professor Siham Lekchiri. Senior MSHR students Tanya Roberts and Jeff Taylor served as project managers, acting as liaisons between the professors, the teams of student-consultants and the client organizations.

The 55 client organizations helped in 2018 ranged from North Carolina to Washington, D.C., and as far away from WCU as Sierra Leone, Africa. They also covered an array of industries, including education (musical empowerment), behavioral health, medicine (Sisters of Mercy Urgent Care, Asheville), the environment, animal welfare (Humane Society of Asheville), children's welfare (YMCA of Greensboro) and many more.



A child in need of specialized medical care and parent head out on a trip provided through Children's Flight of Hope, which is based in Durham. The nonprofit is one of the organizations that has benefited from human resources consultation services provided free through WCU's master's degree program in human resources. (Photo courtesy of Children's Flight of Hope)

One of the nonprofit client organizations was Children's Flight of Hope, based in Durham. Their mission is to provide air transportation for children to access specialized medical care.

Children's Flight of Hope CEO Haley Terry said she knew that, in order to expand successfully, her organization needed a thorough review of its policies and procedures manual, the development of job descriptions and other general human resource considerations, including payroll processes and performance reviews.

Relating her experience working with the MSHR student-consultants from WCU, Terry said, "It has been such a pleasure working with (your) team and this program. As the director of a small nonprofit with limited resources, I have a wide variety of responsibilities, many of which I have had to learn or teach myself. HR, in particular, is not something I've had much experience with but value tremendously.

"I have hoped to build a firm foundation on which to build and retain seasoned nonprofit professionals, but until meeting the HR consulting team at WCU, I wasn't sure how," she said. "The professionalism and structure they brought to enhancing our employee handbook was so very appreciated and something we will use and add to for many, many years. I am grateful for their support and the very nature of this program."

Since its inception in 2011, the Consulting Initiative has facilitated 231 consulting projects for 148 organizations in 15 states involving more than 645 MSHR students – entirely online and at no cost to clients. A new aspect to the service this year is that the Consulting Initiative now collaborates with the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits to offer its members pro bono expertise on a variety of human resources topics and issues. With nearly 1,500 members, the center's mission is to educate, connect and advocate for North Carolina nonprofits.

For more information about the Consulting Initiative, contact Germain at [mgermain@wcu.edu](mailto:mgermain@wcu.edu) or visit [hrconsulting.wcu.edu](http://hrconsulting.wcu.edu).