

Summer '08 INROADS interns expand talents, discover new strengths for business world

by Joshua Graham

INROADS Inc., founded by Frank C. Carr in 1970, is a program designed to increase ethnic diversity in cooperative management in the United States. According to its Web site (www.INROADS.org), the goal is to help change the way candidates gain entry into the business world.

For three MTSU INROADS interns, Danny Heyward, Chris Whitaker and this writer, the program is fulfilling all expectations.

Deborah Roberts, business coordinator for INROADS and director of administrative services at MTSU, is responsible for working with departments to place the interns in jobs relating to their majors around campus.

Roberts, who has worked with INROADS at MTSU since 1996, said a majority of INROADS interns have graduated, and she still remains in contact with some of them today.

"It's an excellent program," Roberts said. "I personally wish I had the opportunity to be with INROADS. It allows students to prepare for the business world."

Danny Heyward, a nongraduating senior majoring in construction management technology, works in construction and renovation at MTSU, completing his third year as an intern.

Heyward said INROADS has helped him with dining etiquette and writing résumés and has guided him in how to speak, present himself and meet the requirements to become a professional in the business world.

INROADS also has inspired Heyward to get involved more with his community. He is participating in Nashville Rescue Mission and Habitat for Humanity.

"I don't want to (only) participate—I want a leadership role," Heyward said.

Chris Whitaker, a rising junior at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, who is majoring in computer science and electrical engineering, works at MTSU with the registrar's office.

Whitaker said that INROADS puts him ahead of the game when preparing his résumé and speaking in public.

Whitaker is also working with the Freshman Summer Institute, a program designed to make the transition from high school to college easier.

"I realized I really liked working in the university setting," Whitaker said. "I like working with the (Freshman Summer Institute) students. It's beneficial and keeps me well-rounded working in so many offices."

Both Whitaker and I have participated in the Toastmasters program, a session for students to practice speaking skills, that is administered by INROADS.

"Now I can jump in front of people and talk," Whitaker said. "I tried to be the last person to do it (speak in public)."



FUTURE LEADERS—The 2008 INROADS interns join their MTSU liaison for a photo during a brief break from their on-campus jobs. From left are Josh Graham, an MTSU sophomore majoring in electronic media communication; Chris Whitaker, a junior from UT Knoxville majoring in computer science and electrical engineering; Deborah Roberts, director of administrative services and INROADS liaison for the university; and Danny Heyward, a senior majoring in construction management at MTSU.

photo by Andy Heidt

My personal experiences with INROADS have been nothing short of an amazing adventure.

I first started INROADS with its pre-college program my junior year of high school. During this program, all the students were able to visit different universities and learn more about the college process. We visited MTSU during one of our university trips, which helped me finalize my decision on which college to choose.

After pre-college, students were then put into a talent pool, where we were given mock interviews to prepare us for real-world interviews. During the summer, INROADS students attend training sessions that focus on important factors to know in the business world, such as business writing, presentation skills, public speaking and managing different generations in the workplace.

I am currently an intern for MTSU, working with the Office of News and Public Affairs. My role in the office has gained me a ton of experience that I can look forward to utilizing in the future. I have been exposed to a variety of media-related responsibilities, including interviewing, working on video shoots, designing and even the basics of answering phones properly and clipping news stories. Thanks to INROADS, I have never felt so prepared for a position before.

Joshua Graham is a sophomore majoring in electronic media communication.

Sells takes reins as interim VP for Student Affairs

by Tom Tozer

Dr. Debra Sells, associate vice provost for Academic Support Services, has been appointed interim vice president for the Division of Student Affairs, effective Aug. 1. She replaces Dr. Bob Glenn, who has accepted the presidency at Athens (Ala.) State University.

Sells, who has been at MTSU for 12 years, said when she asked President Sidney A. McPhee how he defined "interim," he told her not to worry about the word and instead to focus on moving forward with projects already in motion.

"I am pleased that Dr. Sells has agreed to assume the position of interim vice president during this transition period," McPhee commented. "She is an excellent administrator who has demonstrated her concern for students and their welfare on our campus. She has an outstanding record of effective leadership, and I have no doubt she will continue her good work in carrying out her new responsibilities."

Sells referred to the proposed Student Union as one of those important projects already in progress. She said it also is vital to continue such activities as the Distinguished Lecture Series and the Fall Convocation, because such programs "straddle that bridge between faculty and students. We want to bring speakers to campus who

connect with faculty. We ask faculty, 'Who do you want to bring to campus that will enhance your class? We'll find ways to support those cocurricular programs that enhance teaching and learning.'

"Clearly we're working in a difficult budget environment," Sells noted. "When there is a budget crunch, that's a good time to look very strategically at what you're doing. Is everything we do addressing university priorities of recruitment and retention? If not, maybe it's time to take a step back and look again."

Regarding the issue of student-centeredness, Sells said she wants university staff to find ways to say "yes" to students instead of "no."

"Our job requires flexibility and the ability to exercise good judgment about how we can best support an individual student's needs. I hope we're getting better and better," she said, relating a story about a student who said her adviser not only helped her with her paperwork but volunteered to deliver the material to its destination.

"The student was totally stunned," Sells said. "That makes me very happy. It's not everywhere yet, but it's better. We need to keep talking about it."



Sells

Sells said she sees her greatest challenge as prioritizing and figuring out which areas need the most attention. She said her management style is simply to hire the very best people and give them the support and direction they need to do what they do well. "I want to hire the smartest, most highly qualified people we can attract to MTSU."

She speaks highly of her predecessor, who "leaves a rich legacy and who's been a big part of campus life. ... Dr. Glenn came here really determined that we would shift the culture so that a student knew what it meant to be an MTSU student," she said. "We demonstrate what we value by what we support with our presence. Bob certainly did a great job of that."

"I have worked with top student-affairs professionals from all across the country, and I have never come across anyone better qualified or more able than Deb. She will do a terrific job," Glenn said of his successor.

Prior to her position in Academic Support Services, Sells was director of MTSU Housing and Residential Life from 1996 to 2002. Before that, she held residential-life positions at Arizona State University. Sells earned her bachelor's degree in sociology and communications at Hope College, Holland, Mich.; a master's in social work at The University of Michigan; and her doctorate of education from ASU.