International House Alberta
Isha Godara
Career Centre for Peace
Sirsa, Haryana, India

Davis Projects for Peace 2020: Project Narrative

Background Information

Unemployment is often perceived as an economic challenge rather than an obstacle to peace and harmony in a society. However, a continuous increase in unemployment, especially among youth, can not only increase crime levels but in the long-run, it can also lead to the involvement of youth in terrorist activities. Such adverse impacts of unemployment can disrupt peace in society. In recent years, there has been an increase in unemployment in my city (Sirsa) which has increased drug usage and criminal activities among youth. In the past summer, I consulted a number of young people to find out the challenges they face while seeking employment. Most of them indicated that they lack access to advising and help in the process of job search and preparation of job applications. There are no formal career services to help students in the process of looking for employment.

Proposed Activities

I intend to solve this problem in my hometown in India by starting a Career Centre for youth in collaboration with the local university (Jan Nayak Chaudhary Devi Lal Vidyapeeth). In order to start this project, I will run a week-long seminar in the summer of 2020 which will involve thirty to forty youth members from the age of 18-25. This will serve as a foundation for the career centre prototype and proof of concept for a bigger development program in the future.

Day 1: Orientation and Written Communication: Orientation to the seminar, a keynote lecture (about drug addiction and crime) and workshops centred around written communication (email writing, resume and cover letter). The participants will be given different exercises to practise writing professional emails, resumes and cover letters. In the end, there will be a group discussion to discuss the problems the community is facing and what kind of youth engagement can help to mitigate those problems.
Output: Professional email, resume and cover letter template

Day 2: LinkedIn Profile Development: This day will start with a lecture about the role of LinkedIn and other social media platforms in the hiring process. The rest of the day will involve a crash course centred around using developing a LinkedIn profile, strategies to reach out to professionals on LinkedIn, effective job search techniques on LinkedIn, and professional headshot session for LinkedIn. During this, the participants will develop their LinkedIn profiles. Also, this will involve a group discussion on whether recruiters should be checking social media accounts of applicants during the hiring process or not.
Output: Professional LinkedIn profile page per participant

Day 3: Interview Preparation: This day will be entirely focused on the interview preparation. It will start with a keynote lecture related to confidence/public speaking. The rest of the day will involve modules teaching how to research about the company before going for the interview, how to dress appropriately for the interview, how to respond to various kinds of interview questions (behavioural and what resources to prepare for technical questions) and introduction to STAR model of answering questions (STAR Model: Situation, task, action and result). This day will conclude with a mock interview practice and a debrief session with all the participants. **Output:** Minimum of one mock interview with feedback per participant

Day 4: Skills Development: The day will start with a talk about the skills needed in the 21st century to succeed in the workplace. There will be a workshop in which students will search for the necessary skills

required for their dream jobs and conduct a skills gap analysis to find out the skills they lack. After that, there will be two presentations. The first presentation will include information about various resources students can use to develop technical skills such as DataCamp, Coursera, Udemy etc. The second presentation will involve ideas for developing soft skills. It will include information about starting student groups such as Enactus, TEDx etc, organizing conferences on campus and other activities that students can do to develop collaborative skills. In the end, students will come up with a self-development plan, in which they will include three to five skills they want to improve and the strategies they will use to do so. At the end of the day, the participants will be expected to give 2-3 minute speeches related to their personal and professional goals to give them exposure to public speaking.
Output: One speech delivered per student and planning for initiation of a student group

Day 5: Job Search and Networking: The day will start with a presentation about effective job search techniques and the websites to be used for the job search process. After that, there will be a panel discussion from the alumni of the JCD University where the panellists will answer questions related to their personal experiences in the job search process and the strategies they used to deal with failure. The day will conclude with a networking lunch where participants can connect with representatives from different companies. **Output:** Real-time connection with mentors and industry partners

During the workshops, the participants will be given sufficient time to engage in discussions and ask questions. At the end of Day 5, a group discussion will be conducted to gain feedback for the program.

Results & Goals

In partnership with the local university, the Career Centre will provide advising services and various skills-based workshops including repeated sessions of this seminar for local students and periodically for students in rural areas. I will train three to five students to provide career advising services so it is sustainable and more students can be trained in these skills. I will conduct monthly meetings with trained students for the next 12 months. In order to make this financially sustainable, students and other users will be charged a $10-$15 annual fee (sliding scale) after the first year of the program.

In my remaining time, I will set up a permanent space at with necessary infrastructure (computer devices, books, furniture, stationery etc.) which will serve as a hub for the Career Centre and set up an advisory board comprising of two university members, two students and two community leaders. In the first year of the program, I plan for 150-200 youth to use the services of the career centre. After that, I expect a 25%-30% increase in participants over the next three years. The program will be evaluated on a six-month basis to find scope for improvements by gathering feedback from the users.

Indicators of Success

- Demand for the Career Centre
- Interviews and job offers received by the users
- Feedback from the users and corporate partners

By the establishment of the Career Centre, I hope to empower at-risk youth in my hometown by connecting them to resources that will enable them to participate in the workforce and achieve their professional dreams instead of getting into harmful habits such as drug usage. I believe they have immense talent and with an adequate amount of support and guidance, they can not only gain employment but also actively participate in solving social problems. The program will be closely monitored for the first two- three years and will be expanded to involve youth from rural areas near Sirsa. After the two-year period, I aim to collaborate with colleges and universities from nearby cities who face similar challenges to expand this program.