The Flagship Program
Edited by Emily Pritchard

Nicole Mitchell, Program Supervisor and Youth Development Coordinators (YDCs) for The Flagship Program, bring enrichment programs to eight Missoula County Public Schools including Lowell, Franklin and Hawthorne Elementary, CS Porter and Washington Middle and Willard Alternative, Hellgate and Big Sky High Schools. “Interning with Flagship... is a great opportunity for students going in to teaching, psychology, social work and non-profit work.”

What is the Flagship Program?

“The Flagship Program provides school day, lunchtime, and afterschool-focused enrichment programs on site at each of the eight MCPS participating elementary, middle, and high schools. The program takes place within a safe school environment that is both familiar and comfortable to students. Programs are designed to meet the specific needs of each school’s student participants while ensuring that all programming fits core components of: academic achievement, health and wellness, and positive social development.”

“The Flagship Youth Development Coordinators (YDCs) are based at one of the eight MCPS school sites to work directly with students. Each school’s program is managed by a full-time Flagship YDC. At the beginning of each academic year, each YDC develops a 10-week set of programs to be offered during the fall semester. Similarly, after the winter break YDCs develop a new 10-week set of programs to be offered during the winter/spring semester. Students are then invited to sign up for the specific programs offered at their school. These programs have varying participation limits and schedule frequency, as detailed in the Flagship brochures developed for each school. Flagship also offers a five-week, full-day summer program typically implemented from mid-June through late July.”

What is your background and how did you get involved with this program?

“My background is in Art Education and Anthropology. I got involved with Flagship nine years ago. I had heard about the program, it had a great reputation and with an education background I thought it would be a good fit. I love it!”
How do UM student interns help out with this awesome program?

“Having UM interns is incredibly helpful. Ninety percent of Flagship programs are led by volunteer instructors, so having UM interns helps build relationships with students and provides consistency for programs at each Flagship site. Interns participate in a wide variety of programs ranging from; art, tutoring, physical recreation, cooking, film making, science etc.”

“With over 2,000 Missoula youth participating in Flagship every year the gift of time given by volunteers in our community is what keeps Flagship afloat! More than 800 volunteers and community partners give approximately 12,000 hours of mentoring to Missoula’s youth through The Flagship Program!”

What’s their work schedule like? What’s the work environment like?

“Depending on how many credits a student is interning for depends on the amount of hours per week they intern. It ranges from 4-6 hours per week.”

“Interning with Flagship is a great school based experience. Our Flagship school sites are K-12, so depending, UM students can intern at an elementary, middle or high school. Flagship is an after school environment that provides a range of enrichment opportunities to student participants. It is a learning environment, where students gain new skills, make new friends, and take field trips to learn more about the community they live in.”
What kind of training do your interns receive?

“We provide an initial training for all instructors before they begin working with Flagship. It consists of background information about Flagship; youth development; behavior management strategies; policies and procedures; and working in a school setting.”

“Interning with Flagship is a great hands-on experience in working with students in a school setting. It’s a great opportunity for students going in to teaching, psychology, social work and non-profit work.”

Would you recommend having UM interns to other employers?

“Yes, it’s a great way for students to gain experience in the field and for employers to learn and grow while managing costs.”

When and how do you advertise for interns?

“We promote Flagship in UM classes, on the UM website and through Internship Services.”

Are you looking for students from specific majors, years in school, or with specific qualifications?

“Yes; psychology, education, HHP and social work are great. Any major works, we just want to make sure it is a good fit for the student and Flagship. Flagship looks for students who possess leadership skills; enjoy working with youth; and are flexible and compassionate about the work we do.”

Where can students go for more information: www.flagshipprogram.org