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Inkululeko: Students Intern at South African Charity

Chelsea Le Staff Writer

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Courtesy of Theresa Larre

Inkululeko, a non-profit organization based in New York and Makhanda, South Africa, provides middle and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds support to improve on areas of academic deficiency for success at a university level.

Three Villanova students, senior Theresa Larre, and juniors Isabel Langas and Alexa Dang, are making a difference within the organization by dedicating their time to raising awareness about the mission.

Larre discovered the opportunity to work with Inkululeko her junior year while searching for marketing positions as a summer intern. After finding the organization on Handshake, she interviewed with the founder, Jason Torrerano, and found her place in the Inkululeko family.

“When I began my internship, I was the only Villanova student,” Larre said. “Through my sorority, I was able to recommend the internship and volunteering for other Villanovans. I was so excited to bridge the gap between my passion at Inkululeko and my sisters in Kappa Kappa Gamma. Villanova and Inkululeko share many of the same morals and goals for a better life through the power of education.”

During her time with the organization, Larre worked on a variety of projects with marketing and social media. Finding her passion in tutoring students through WhatsApp during the summer and into the fall, she co-created the Business Skills program which focuses on lessons in Marketing, Finance, Accounting and Human Resources. Now as a mentor, Larre serves as a member of the Friends of Inkululeko.

“The greatest gift you can give someone is the power of education,” Larre said. “Through Inkululeko and all the volunteers, we are able to do that for the students in South Africa. Being part of this organization has shown me that one person is able to make a change in this world.”

After graduation, Larre will be moving to New York City and working at NTT Data.

Langas heard about the organization through Larre and applied to join the spring internship program. She and Dang are currently interning this semester.

Within the organization, Langas works on partner outreach and growth, grant research, social media and PR. She is currently working on developing a media list and getting their Instagram verified (@Inkululeko).

“By working to develop awareness about Inkululeko and their mission, I help increase the potential for donations and physical support from a wider community,” Langas said.

“Ultimately, this will provide more resources for the learners and allow Inkululeko to further their mission to help learners in more rural areas.”

A typical week with Inkululeko for Langas includes meeting with her mentor, who helps with research projects. The organization has biweekly meetings on Zoom, but only one is required and provides an opportunity for interns to hear about one another's projects. A typical work week is eight hours, but the hours are flexible as long as the project is moving forward.

Langas' most memorable experience has been getting to know people within the organization.

"It's amazing working with likeminded people who are passionate about the same things I am," Langas said. "I hope to get to meet some of the learners at some point too, even if it's just over Zoom."

Dang's involvement with Inkululeko involves fundraising by researching and applying for grants for the organization. She also assists in developing and teaching lessons in STEM for students in South Africa and is working on putting together an ArcGIS story map for Inkululeko.

"I think that education programs in developing countries are the most important international programs because they are sustainable programs that give people tools to make changes in their communities and in the world," Dang said.

Dang is particularly passionate about being a part of Inkuleko's efforts in supporting its students and making a difference in their lives.

"I strongly believe that socioeconomic class, race, gender, ability and sexuality should have no impact on an individual's access to education or to an individual's access to quality education," Dang said.