Note: This month’s Education newsletter was authored by Hannah Olaniyan. Hannah is serving as a policy intern at the Institute for Emerging Issues through the Z. Smith Reynolds Non-Profit Internship Program (NPIP). Hannah will graduate spring 2016 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in Political Science and Public Policy.

Removing Barriers to Student Internships with Nonprofits

Having an internship while in college has proven beneficial for students hoping to find an entry level job after graduation. Internships offer students a great introduction to the workforce and provide firsthand exposure to fields they hope to enter after college. Internship and previous work experience are important factors considered by employers in the hiring process, and along with the interview are major factors that can affect the hiring decision.

In North Carolina the number of nonprofit jobs is growing, but due to a lack of resources many nonprofit organizations offer only unpaid internships to students. Many students are unable to accept unpaid internships due to financial hardships and instead work in the for-profit sector. This severely limits the diversity of the applicant pool for many of the nonprofit opportunities, thus reinforcing existing

Featured Educator

This month’s featured educator, Rachel Pedler, engages her students with real-world science applications. Learn more.

Featured Youth Engagement

As you plan summer activities for your youth/young adult group, add Summer in the Commons to your agenda.

Featured Program

Read more about the ZSR Foundation and NPIP.
racial and socioeconomic roles in the nonprofit sector. Whites make up the majority of the executives, board members, and professionals in the sector, while minorities and those with lower socioeconomic status typically are over-represented among the clients the nonprofits serve. If more college students were given the opportunity to take part in paid internships in the nonprofit field, this inequality could be shifted.

IEL intern Hannah Olaniyan introduces young visitors to the Emerging Issues Commons.

The Z. Smith Reynolds (ZSR) Foundation is striving to correct this imbalance and diversify the pool of students who are able to accept internships in the nonprofit sector. In 2010, the Foundation created the Nonprofit Internship Program (NPIP), which annually provides nonprofit internship opportunities across the state to as many as 20 Pell grant recipients in North Carolina. The NPIP program offers these students paid, full-time, eight-week internship placements with a variety of organizations. To make this possible for the grantee organizations, the NPIP program covers two-thirds of each intern’s stipend.

This marks the fifth year of NPIP summer interns being placed in nonprofits across North Carolina, working in policy, advocacy, social equity, and activism. The ZSR staff provide the students and organizations with an opening and closing orientation, regular check-ins, and networking with other ZSR interns and grantee organizations in the region. ZSR staff also sends surveys to the interns and nonprofits to ensure that both the students and organizations are benefitting from the internship and to gain feedback NPIP uses to support continuous improvement.

By eliminating financial obstacles for both interns and organizations, the ZSR Foundation provides students
like myself with the opportunity to gain valuable experience in nonprofit sector.

Do you know a teacher who is working hard to help students succeed? Let us know, and s/he could be featured in the next education issue!