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City of Morris garners intern Zac Van Cleve ’13 through Students in Service

Summary: Blaine Hill ’87, city manager, believes that both student and city have benefited from the program.

(May 4, 2011)-The City of Morris lucked out when it snagged one of four Students in Service (SIS) last fall. The Center for Small Towns (CST) at the University of Minnesota, Morris provided four students to the nationwide AmeriCorps program last fall, a number they’ve upped to 11 during spring semester. Students participating in the program give 300 hours of service over the course of a year. Zac Van Cleve ’13, St. Paul, decided to take a closer look at the opportunity when Paula O’Loughlin, professor of political science, brought up the project to him.

A political science and sociology major, Van Cleve has a strong interest in city government, and the SIS program allowed him to pursue that interest. He says city government creates a “more direct connection to the people of the city” and that it is “much more personal” than other forms of government. He also says that this is a nice project to work on in a small town, where the effects of decisions are more tangible. Van Cleve is working closely with city manager Blaine Hill ’87, conducting a variety of tasks. He says he has been doing a lot of data entry and analysis, but that it’s “something new every week.”

Hill believes both the student and city have benefited from the SIS program. He describes Van Cleve’s experience as a kind of “Government 101.” Van Cleve is learning a little bit of everything, from budget presentations to insurance research to zoning information. Hill says, “It’s nice talking politics with him,” and he’s very helpful.

With commencement still two years away, Van Cleve isn’t certain what he wants to do after graduation, but he’s not ruling out working with city government as a possibility. He describes his city internship as very positive, saying it is “very fulfilling, a lot of fun, a good experience.” He also says that, given the option, he would enjoy working on a similar SIS project in the future.

If your organization would be interested an SIS member in the future, please contact Jessica Beyer at 320-589-6451.

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The Center for Small Towns is a community outreach program housed at the Morris campus that serves as a point-of-entry to University of Minnesota resources. Small towns, local units of government, K–12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center’s resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Their mission is to focus the University’s attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota’s small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty.
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