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*A Program of Distinction*  
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**TO:** Alison Fahey  
**AT:** AdWeek  
**DATE:** 8/4/07  
**RE:** AEF Fellowship

Dear Ms. Fahey:

I'm back in my normal routine as associate professor and coordinator of the Ad+PR programs at Western Kentucky University. But, for the past two weeks, I've had the most intense professional experience of my life completing a fellowship sponsored by the Advertising Educational Foundation (AEF) and funded by Young & Rubicam.

I'm sure you are aware of the AEF Fellowship. But, I'm not sure the ad industry executives are aware of how beneficial the fellowship is to college professors. We all know that the ad business is changing dramatically. I think it's more important than ever that academia and the ad business partner to provide the right tools for graduates to make the most out of these new opportunities. While I spend time each day looking at the trades (AdWeek), industry internet sites, and blogs to uncover changes and trends, it's not the same as actually seeing these changes first hand. Not even close!

My fellowship began with a morning orientation at AEF's offices in NYC on July 16th. It was great to meet the other dozen professors completing their fellowships in NY. I understand that another 4 professors completed fellowships in Chicago. AEF's VP and Program Manager, Sharon Hudson and CEO, Paula Alex covered the background of the Visiting Professor Program (VPP) and some faculty "survival tips" for the experience. The entire group was then treated a six-hour presentation by the team at JWT. William Charnock, and Chief Experience Officer, Colleen DeCourcy lead an amazing session on the challenges of the ad industry and how JWT is responding. On Tuesday, faculty spent the morning with McCann Erickson hearing about the McCann organization and case studies. We spent the afternoon with executives at Ogilvy hearing about the history and business of Ogilvy today. These were major presentations with key executives who donated their time to educate us on what they do.

Participants in the fellowship are paired with agencies and ad organizations to complete the program. I was partnered with BrandBuzz, one of the Y&R brands on Madison Avenue the first week. Gordon McLean, Global Managing Partner at Y&R suggested that I should also visit VML, another Y&R brand in Kansas City, MO in my second week. The people at BrandBuzz were incredible. They really welcomed me into their operation and I learned a great deal by interacting with the staff and sitting in on meetings.

VML was pretty amazing. Chief Operating Officer, Craig Braasch and Partner, Director of Organizational Development, Beth Wade put together an incredible curriculum for me on the second week. As a digital agency, VML is responding to changes in advertising practice in some radical ways. Executives from each department spent time with me explaining what they do and they were all willing to spend extra time to answer any questions I had. I can only imagine the actual cost of their time. But, I'll never forget their kindness and their passion for what they do.

As I approach my 18<sup>th</sup> year of teaching this fall, I really feel that I have a completely new perspective. While I know that teaching technical skills is important, my big take-away from the VPP experience was that we should also foster more creativity in our program. We need to think well beyond conventional advertising practice. Technological skills will evolve, but instilling a passion for creativity and problem solving is really essential to what we do. The power of great ideas really hit home to me over the past couple of weeks.

My hope is that more agencies and ad organizations will see the huge impact they can make by spending time with college faculty through a structured program like the VPP. It really makes sense for both of us. I know that faculty want to stay current and I'm confident the ad industry could use graduates who are ready to effectively contribute. It's a win-win situation in my opinion. Please contact Sharon Hudson at 212.986.8060, x15 or me for any additional information you may need.

Best regards,

Cliff Shaluta  
Associate Professor  
Coordinator of the Ad & PR Programs  
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