In early April 2004, I received an email from Peter Pitts asking if I would be interested in planning a reception through Monmouth College as an internship. Though, I was not planning on doing an internship until well into my junior year, I did not want to pass up this opportunity. Wanting to go into a career in event planning, I felt that this would be the ideal way to learn more about what event planning entails. My experience was very beneficial from the beginning thoughts to the final outcome. I will explain the theory behind the reception, followed by the process that was taken, the reality of what actually occurred and then my evaluation of the reception and overall internship.

The reception I would be planning was the Monmouth College Katherine Legge Reception for Chicago area students. Every summer this reception has been held for incoming and prospective students to Monmouth College. This would be the 12th annual reception, and the first year of turning it into an internship for a current student. As my site supervisor, Peter Pitts would guide me through the planning, organizing and executing of the reception. We would communicate mainly through emails and phone calls, along with having one-on-one meetings at least once a month and sometimes once or more a week. My personal goals for the internship were to understand how communication takes a role in event planning, to develop an effective organization scheme, to adapt to the audience and plan according to the setting, to use problem solving and conflict management, produce an appropriate and effective message, and balance numerous tasks with attention to detail.
Peter and I met for the first time during the internship on April 12th. This is when we discussed the overall plans and ideas for the reception. He wanted me to start advertising for the reception to current students immediately. Along with this, my other urgent task was to get a small committee together to help me with the reception. I was told to hold meetings once my committee was formed. Once the semester ended and summer started, I would meet with Peter more often and start planning the details of the event. I would also send out invitations to current student’s homes to obtain a more definite response of who was attending. Lastly, I would work out all of the details including logistics, decorations, food and speakers. Our plan, or theory, was to simplify the reception. The actual reception would include speakers, lunch, ice cream, question and answer sessions, and bagpipes. After coming up with the general ideas, the process began evolving.

The process of planning the reception took many steps and required much attention to detail. The very first step was designing flyers to post around campus to spread the word about the reception. Soon after posting flyers I also designed invitations to be put in student mail boxes of those who lived in the Chicago area. Design and Graphic Design classes helped in this step. I used what I learned about negative space, fonts and colors to make designs appealing to students yet clear and to the point. My next step involved bringing together a small committee of current students to help me through the entire process. The first group put together consisted of *Kelly, *Britney, *Sue, and *Bob. This is when I first dealt with conflict management. Since I was told *Sue would help, but was unable to touch base with her, I decided to find a different person. *Tina helped Peter in the past and was suggested, however, there was a major conflict with her. She was extremely upset about my having the reception as an internship and her not having as
big of a role as she may have in the past. Therefore, she was unwilling to help in any way. After our first group meeting, *Dan was recommended as a committee member. We immediately asked him and he responded yes. Later, *Jill joined when one of the members brought her to a meeting where she brainstormed some very good ideas. I made an agenda before each committee meeting. I then followed up with emails of what we covered during the meeting for those who could not attend and as reminders for those who did attend.

The next step involved planning the details of the event. Before doing this, I made a to-do list for myself, using Peter’s past to-do lists as a guideline. I first reviewed the binder of information from past receptions that Peter gave me. One of the first decisions I made was for our mc’s. Since *Sue had done it in the past but would probably not attend this year; *Britney, who had also mc’ed in the past, was chosen. *Kelly was chosen for the other session. I then came up with the ideas of having a video, a jeopardy type game and interest tables. While still on campus, I met with John Klockentager and Sherrie Brooks about the overall ideas; and specifically met with Sherrie to discuss the invitations for incoming and prospective students which she would be designing and sending out. I also contacted Jeff Behnke, who had been in charge of food in the past, and attended a meeting with him and Peter at Katherine Legge Lodge to decide on food arrangements and decorations. I was told to get four to six helpers for food at the reception.

Another idea I came up with was to have current students attend half of the day of the reception, rather than the entire day. In the past, students were to be there from early morning until around 6:00 P.M. and as they got tired, were not as interested in helping. I thought I would solve this problem by having them stay for a total of about four to five hours rather than nine to ten. Rather than sixty current students for the entire day, I would have thirty from 8:00-12:30 and
thirty from 12:30-5:30. Throughout the day would be two incoming student sessions and a prospective student session, respectively. We planned for the prospective session to have programs running both upstairs and downstairs due to the amount of people attending. Speakers were chosen for all of the sessions, which included *Kyle, *Heidi, *Paul, *Alice, *Judge Smith, and *Judge Murphy.

After designing and sending invitations to student’s homes, I followed up with the non-respondents who have attended in the past by phone calls and emails. This eventually brought the number up to where it has been in the past. I continued to delegate assignments to my committee, especially closer to the date of the reception with helping make balloon weights and interest table signs. I decided to add one speaker to the incoming session and chose *Kelly as the speaker. Mr. and Mrs. *Johnston and *Jason were chosen to work the sign in table for prospective and incoming students. Peter and I decided to cancel the photo board showing past receptions, cancel the jeopardy game, and play the video in the background rather than at a specific time during the sessions. I assigned all volunteers to one half of the day and followed up with all the yes-respondents to remind them a few days before, along with follow up letters in the mail.

The last part of planning the reception was planning a meeting for the volunteers the morning of the reception. On the day of the event, I planned to delegate assignments for setup, hold a meeting, overlook the reception to make sure volunteers were at their assigned positions, delegate assignments for cleanup, and after it was over, to start thank you notes.

What actually occurred during the reception, the reality of it, was closely related to what we had planned during the process. I did everything on my to-do list before or by the deadline I had set. On the day of the reception, my committee and I were supposed to be early to help with
set up and learn more about the day. However, other than me, only one committee member was on time. One other called saying she would be late. I was worried about *Bob, *Jill and *Dan not coming since they were hours late, so I called their cell phones. Soon after reaching each of them, they showed up to the reception. One aspect that changed greatly was the video. In the theory of it, we had planned to make it part of the session and play the video with music. I had previously organized all of the pictures onto a CD on power point and took video clips. I then gave it all to another committee member who volunteered to put it together into a video with music. However, she did not get it completed until the day before. Since Peter was not able to view it ahead of time, we cut it from the schedule and played it in the lobby area rather than during each session.

For the food portion, we ended up having four steady volunteers for the entire day and two who helped out when needed. One of my biggest worries was not having enough volunteers for food, but the reality of it worked out well. The only problem with food was a few complaints of it being cold. That was due to having the food out for one time frame rather than two separate times as in past receptions. The number of overall volunteers worked out better than planned. Our goal was thirty students for each half of the day. We ended up with thirty for the first half and thirty-five for the second half plus faculty, staff, coaches, and alumni.

The speaking portion of the prospective portion did not go as planned. At the last minute, as the bagpiper was leading in to start the session, I was told to have one session downstairs rather than two, upstairs and downstairs. I therefore had to make a quick decision about who would speak. I chose one person from each set of speakers who seemed the most prepared. However, when I informed the speakers of this change, those not speaking were very upset and told me they came only to speak. Reconsidering my choice, to be fair, I quickly decided to have
each set of speakers speak together, which they were fine with. Yet another conflict occurred as the first set of speakers, recent graduates, stood up to speak. One of them continued speaking for about fifteen minutes even after us signaling for her to stop after five minutes. The other recent graduate was then only able to quickly say a few things. During that time, I suggested to the mc to cut the other two speakers due to time. She failed to take my suggestion, and called one of the speakers out of the next set to speak. Only one speaker was not given the chance to speak. Even though the reality of the speeches did not go as planned, I noticed that the audience was responding well to the presentation. Each of the speakers was very honest and sincere, adapting well to the audience.

I made assignment sheets for each volunteer to follow throughout the day. It seemed as if many people did not follow what was written. Those who were assigned to be greeters were not as willing to stand and greet people as soon as their friends arrived. They then seemed more concerned with socializing. To avoid conflict, my solution was to find others who were willing to accept this job. The interest tables started off as planned, except for a few current students who did not go to their tables leaving the tables unattended. To help resolve this problem I bounced around from table to table of any organization or interest I was a part of so that the prospective and incoming students could have someone to speak to. The rest of the day seemed to go as planned.

Now that the reception is over, I can look back and evaluate the process and outcome. One of the first decisions I made was for the mc. I did not think twice about it or even think I could ask anyone else to accept that position because the mc had a big role in past receptions and Peter and I discussed her being the mc. Now that I look back, I can think of others that may have
been better suited for that role. She seemed to get side tracked where as others could probably follow along the sheet, being clear and to the point. Another observation I made was that since one of my committee members had a big role in the past, she wanted to continue that this year. During meetings, I noticed she tried to take over at times and spoke over me. I thought I would use this to my advantage by having her be in charge of the question and answer session for the students. However, when I walked upstairs to check on the question and answer, I noticed it was very pro-Greek, opposite of what we wanted since guests complained of that in the past. I immediately put a stop to that by asking the current students to take a seat with the prospective students rather than standing up as a panel.

During the meetings with my committee, I felt like none of the students truly listened to what I was saying or took me as seriously as they would if Peter was running the meeting. Discussing this with Peter, I came to the conclusion that I was not as highly respected or looked at as an authority figure due to my being the same age or younger than everyone on my committee. Age has a part to play in how others treat and respect you. I thought that we could have actually done without a committee or just had one or two people help me where needed. It seemed more of a hassle than a help when I had to delegate assignments. Committee members usually procrastinated or did not do their assignment all together. I did all I could with emailing and calling to remind them after they had volunteered. Finally I decided to do it myself so that it would get done and checked off on my to-do list.

I also thought that the initial flyers or invitations were not necessary. The word did get out that way, but mostly to people who had come to the reception in the past and would come even if the flyers were not posted. We could have gotten out the same message by word of
mouth. Only a few students responded that early and about half of them were unable to come when they checked their schedules closer to the date.

One aspect that could have been improved was the speeches. Not only was the timing completely off, but they could have been developed to better adapt to the audience, incoming or prospective students. I was told not to check their speeches and to trust them, as in the past. I, however, wanted to check the speeches. If checked ahead of time, the time concern and adapting to the audience could have been solved by my giving suggestions. The improv group could also have been improved. The audience did not seem to respond favorably, and the performance did not appear as high of quality as in past receptions. A solution may have been to omit it completely.

One aspect that worked exceptionally well was the interest tables. Though at times current students were not at their assigned tables, I heard many positive comments about the overall idea. Prospective and incoming students liked that they were able to ask specific questions directly to someone involved in certain organizations. Having the tent outside made it better so that it was shaded from the sun and in a casual atmosphere where people could spread out and move around.

Overall, I believe a tremendous amount of time and effort was put into the planning of the reception but reality was it did not show as much at the reception itself. It went well, but no better than in past receptions. I do think, however, that turning it into an internship gave a new look and input on the way it was put together. It was developed more so through the eyes of a student. This year many new ideas were introduced, including the interest tables, video, different speakers, and the idea of having some sort of game. We tested the ideas that can be more developed and used in years to come.
The entire experience of planning, organizing and executing the Katherine Legge Reception was very rewarding. I was able to use skills learned in classes, make contacts and friends, and learn more about myself. I constructed a persuasive message throughout the whole reception, both directly through my speaking to others, and indirectly through the volunteers to the prospective and incoming students. Using a variety of message forms was a necessity through posting flyers, sending invitations, giving an oral speech, holding meetings, making phone calls and sending emails. The setup of the program for prospective students and incoming students was constructed differently in order to adapt to their wants and needs. A small amount of research was used while putting together the interest tables. The Monmouth College website was helpful with the list of all organizations and activities so that I could match current students with their most popular interests. With all of these aspects combined, I constructed a message appropriate for all during the reception, recruiting prospective students and welcoming new students.

My interpersonal, group and organizational skills reflected strongly on what I learned in Small Group Communication class. At meetings, I took on the role of the leader and had to delegate assignments to my committee. I had to use teamwork while completing tasks. I dealt with conflict management and decision making when the problem with *Tina came about and when certain students were not following assignments. From class, I had previous experience in working with groups so I was aware of different roles and eager to solve problems. Many of the committee members seemed to take on the role of special interest pleader while talking about different activities other than the reception, and at one time, bringing pictures of something completely unrelated to the task. They also seemed to get off the subject a lot. Many of them
seemed more people oriented, trying to help the group get along. I enforced tasks so that goals were attained.

Doing this internship gave me the opportunity to further my knowledge of different forms of technology and put my skills to use. I was able to use excel, word, internet explorer, power point and publisher to complete my work. Through emails I dealt a lot with sending attachments of files in each of these programs. I am a very organized person and organization was a main piece of planning the reception. I needed to record and keep files of all of my work, maintain numbers and information on all volunteers, my committee and Peter’s information, and keep projects and assignments orderly for final presentation at the reception and to Peter at meetings. Being self motivated and independent, I gave myself deadlines and goals and was able to complete each one ahead of time along with prioritizing my time for other things I am involved in. I am also a very energetic person and it showed while doing the work for the reception. I was excited each time I had a new task to begin and even more excited by the finished product. As the reception neared, I looked forward to it, encouraging and reminding others to attend. My positive outlook on the reception mirrored the volunteers’ outlook. Most of all I was able to be creative in planning an event very important to the recruiting of students to Monmouth College.

I learned a lot about myself through this internship experience. One aspect was my reluctance to delegate assignments to others. Being very independent and a self-starter, I like to do everything myself rather than depend on others to get it done. It was even easier to do it myself when my committee did not complete what they volunteered to do. I learned that in order to delegate, I need to find volunteers who are dependable. If that means not choosing friends, or people I am closest to, than that is what I would have to do when the task is at hand. Another benefit is that I was given the opportunity to communicate more by phone. I never enjoyed
talking on the phone, but doing this gave me more confidence in my delivery and communicating skills. It helped me feel more comfortable communicating through phone calls. I also learned that I do have more persuasive ability than I thought I did even though some fail to acknowledge it. More leadership qualities will come with more years of experience and with age. Most of all, I realized I love being in control of events. It was hard when the actual presentation was taking place and I was in the background. I wanted to take more initiative in directing volunteers, yet did not want to seem overbearing. However, when people thanked me and complimented my accomplishments afterwards, my hard work paid off. Doing this internship showed me how much I do like planning events. I still want a career in that field, hoping to eventually manage a company where I would have the authority and role that I desire. I am glad to have been given the opportunity of this specific internship. I look forward to seeing how the Katherine Legge Reception advances and grows in years to come.