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DUKE FUQUA
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

How Duke's Fuqua Volunteer Corps Helps Nonprofits Navigate the COVID-19 Crisis

Many students who graduated in May fell victim to an environment of increased unemployment and scarce job opportunities. Due to COVID-19, hiring effectively stopped —and the job market remains challenging.

"For a lot of students, it's easy in a pandemic to just feel lost. It was important for us that they feel supported by Fuqua and by DataCamp. Being able to say early on that DataCamp was behind them made them feel really valued. And they were doing something that was important because nonprofits are definitely struggling."

JEREMY PETRANKA, ASSISTANT DEAN, MQM PROGRAM

Overview of the Fuqua Volunteer Corps

The Fuqua Volunteer Corps (FVC) is a volunteer network of Duke's business school students and recent graduates that supports nonprofits ranging from hyperlocal to international organizations during the COVID-19 crisis. These nonprofits have suffered from reduced philanthropy, strategic realignment, and altered methods of access, and were in need of assistance to obtain actionable insights and make data-driven decisions.

Through a combination of outreach by Fuqua's social media channels, the Fuqua student advisory board, a feature on a local news station, and word of mouth—99 nonprofit opportunities have been identified, with 133 student volunteers offering their help.

> **"We were cautiously excited, but we did not expect this level of engagement. It went like gangbusters."**
>
> JEREMY PETRANKA, ASSISTANT DEAN, MQM PROGRAM

Providing in-house analytics expertise for nonprofits

The Fuqua Volunteer Corps comprised students and recent graduates across several master's and MBA programs. The largest cohort is students in Fuqua's Master of Quantitative Management (MQM) program.

> **"Most nonprofits we partner with do not have in-house analytics expertise, so our students have recognized that having access to DataCamp as an in-house expert would be a very strong support system."**
>
> JEREMY PETRANKA, ASSISTANT DEAN, MQM PROGRAM

Every MQM student achieves baseline proficiency in R with DataCamp before starting the program. They continue to have access throughout the year and are able to use DataCamp's bite-size lessons to easily pick up new skills for specific projects and get more comfortable with R and Python.

Gaining confidence with DataCamp

> "We leave it up to the students to explore the DataCamp platform, which gives them the flexibility to go as deep as they want. I tell students to always start there because there's nothing technical that they might need to know that isn't on DataCamp."
>
> **JEREMY PETRANKA, ASSISTANT DEAN, MQM PROGRAM**

MQM students in the Fuqua Volunteer Corps were able to confidently apply their new data skills to concrete problems, and use DataCamp as a reference for specific tasks they want to accomplish.

> "I am working with the Institute for Environmental Innovation to design dashboards for their database and a predictive modeling project for The Redwoods Group.
>
> I used DataCamp to go through fundamental R courses and become more familiar with, and confident in, data wrangling. The courses are really helpful for review and practice. I am planning to continue using DataCamp to dive deeper into R and Python."
>
> **ELLEN LU, FUQUA VOLUNTEER CORPS MEMBER**

The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program

One nonprofit partner of the Fuqua Volunteer Corps is The International Small Group and Tree Planting (TIST) Program, whose mission is to serve smallholder farmers to improve their farms, livelihoods, communities, and the planet by planting trees and practicing conservation farming.

TIST captures a wealth of data from farmers to track tree growth and progress toward the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The challenge is that this data is stored in an operational database with no reporting layer, making it difficult to extract insights.

The volunteers provided guidance for data capture and blockchain strategy as well as technical expertise to automate complex reporting processes with Python, saving them hours of work to extract data.

> "In one of our projects, a Fuqua Volunteer Corps volunteer was able to recreate a SQL script and manual Excel processes into one Python script that saves us hours every time we need to extract data."
>
> SUZANNE HOLMBERG, DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS AT TIST

FVC volunteers relied on a diverse set of skills to complete their projects, from utilizing MySQL, data visualization in Power BI, Python, and much more.

Equipping students with in-demand skills in a tough job market

Members of the Fuqua Volunteer Corps found purpose in these hard times by building real-world experience and helping others. They've refined their data skills while participating in meaningful work.

> "Master of Quantitative Management (MQM) students who have DataCamp access are absolutely using it. And the skillsets they've gained between the Fuqua Volunteer Corps opportunities and DataCamp have made them more marketable."
>
> JEREMY PETRANKA, ASSISTANT DEAN, MQM PROGRAM

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