

Widener University

▶ Open Audio Article Player

Being a VITA volunteer was very eye-opening

April 17, 2024

By Austin Oliver

0:00 / 0:00



Austin Oliver (left) and fellow student Genevieve Marvil, assist a client with tax preparation documents.

For the second year, Widener’s School of Business Administration, in collaboration with the Community Action Agency of Delaware County (CAADC), hosted the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Tax Clinic in Chester to help Delaware County residents file their taxes for free.

Being from Maryland, I wasn’t very familiar with the Chester community before coming to Widener. As I’m nearing the end of my college experience and thinking about the future and what path I’m going to take in life, I was interested in getting some hands-on experience that would help provide direction for my future. My advisor told me about the VITA Tax Clinic,

and I knew it would be a great fit.

I and other student volunteers went through training and testing to be certified to submit income tax documents under supervision from Community Action Agency staff. We studied and completed three tests through the IRS about tax terminology, process, and rules to become

VITA-certified tax preparers. Going out into my career after college already with this knowledge and certification is a huge plus.

Everyone we helped was so appreciative, which was the best part of it for me. I really enjoyed being able to help community members who are looking to save money in what can usually be an expensive process through for-profit tax preparation services. In addition to just feeling good about helping the community, I was also able to use this experience as an internship for my program and as an opportunity to figure out what path I want to take in the business world.

Working at the clinic also helped me improve my communication skills. I'm grateful to the clients I assisted who taught me how filing taxes can be confusing or complicated for people who are not familiar with finance or accounting. Being able to help a wide variety of clients and make sure they understood the terminology is something I know will help me in my future career.

This experience demonstrated the terrific opportunities Widener has to serve people from the local community, who in turn help students like me develop new skills by trusting us with their tax preparation needs.

This kind of community collaboration is a rewarding opportunity because everyone wins. It's important to look at things that are bigger than you as a student, and I find that helping other people is one of the most important things in growing as a human being.

Austin Oliver is a senior finance major in Widener University's School of Business Administration.