

Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity

Digital Nomadism: Examining Novel Forms of Organizing

Faculty Mentor: Leslie DeChurch, Professor, Communication Studies, School of Communication (Evanston campus)

Project Synopsis: Given the amount of an adult's life spent working, it is perhaps no surprise that work can be a significant factor in well-being. The renewed focus on well-being as the world emerges out of the global Covid-19 pandemic has heightened interest in novel forms of organizing that offer enhanced opportunities for well-being and non-traditional work that takes place outside an office setting. One form, digital nomadism, has been especially noteworthy among technology workers who work as part of the gig-economy.

Digital nomadism, a term first coined by Makimoto and Manners (1997), is a novel technology-enabled form of organizing fitting in the genre of gig work more generally, where individuals spend significant amounts of time working from remote locations. Digital nomads, as they are called, are location-independent individuals who use technology to perform their job. The aim of this project is to understand the nature of digital nomadism work practices, how individuals are using it, the kinds of individuals who are adopting this work practice, and the degree to which digital nomadism enables short versus more permanent changes in work practices.

Project Term: Summer + academic year, 2 terms

Project Location: The student(s) can work from anywhere during the summer quarter so long as they are willing to work online during the daytime work hours in the central european time zone when we are conducting interviews online with digital nomads. The interviews will be conducted with digital nomads who are currently based in Europe. No travel is required.

Ideal Applicant: The ideal applicant will have an interest in organizational behavior any disciplinary perspective. Some majors who would be ideal mentees for this research include: psychology, communication, business institutions, economics, and industrial engineering and management sciences. The ideal applicant is interested in learning research skills that include designing, administering, and analyzing data from surveys, conducting semi-structured interviews, coding qualitative data, and preparing research reports to summarize findings in a concrete way. Students will work with me on all aspects of the project, from designing the survey and interview protocol, to conducting interviews, analyzing data, and preparing presentations and a manuscript based on our findings. All interviews will be conducted in English, and so no specific foreign language skills are required. Students need to have a willingness to learn how to use Qualtrics survey software. Students will need to have taken a course in statistics and/or research methods.

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Number of Available Positions: Two



