

Audio file

[Rusul Podcast.mp3](#)

Transcript

Abby

Welcome to the Digital Creator Podcast, the show where we spotlight students working on cool digital projects. I'm Abby Firestone, a consultant at the Digital Knowledge Center where we empower students to be digital creators. Today's guest is Rusul, who served as a consultant at the DKC until she graduated in the spring of 2026. This episode highlights experiences and memories that she gained while working here.

Rusul

So my name is Rusul. Abbas, if you need my last name. My pronouns are she/her. My major, well I'm double majoring, so my primary major is [data science](#). My secondary major is [communication and digital studies](#).

Abby

This interview is going to be a little different than some of our others just because we're recording with people who actually work at the DKC. So, could you tell me a little bit about like how you came to learn about the DKC? What led you to working here?

Rusul

So, I think I remember hearing about it during our [FSEMs](#). But honestly, my FSEM professor focused more on the speaking and writing center. But I took an [Intro to Digital Studies](#) class my first semester, which I heard is pretty rare for freshmen for the first semester to be an intro to digital studies. I don't know. I think space was limited. But anyway, so, my professor mentioned that the DKC is hiring. And honestly, everything sounded interesting and I was like, this is great. But I didn't have any experience, and I didn't know what the DKC was looking for. So, I remember talking to my professor and she actually encouraged me and she recommended that I apply here.

She thought that my skills would align very well. And I was like, yeah, but I haven't really done anything technical. But she still encouraged me to apply. So, I did. And I don't know if she put in a word for me. I think she talked to Cartland about it. But yeah.

Abby

So, was that how you found out like the DKC was hiring?

Rusul

Through my professor. And funny enough, that same class, another student or a friend of mine was telling me how she got her job on campus through a professor. And I was just like, interesting.

Abby

So how long have you been working at the DKC?

Rusul

Four years. Almost. I mean, I didn't work here my first semester, so it was like 3 years and a semester, so, 3 1/2, I guess.

Abby

I know you said, like, you didn't have a whole lot of experience with digital tools. Like you said, "I haven't really done that much digitally." Did you have, like, any previous experience or was it really, like, kind of getting thrown into the deep end outside of what you've learned in Intro to Digital Studies?

Rusul

I mean, I had presentation experience, so Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, whatnot. But I also had, I don't know. That's honestly all I can remember through, I mean, from digital work. But I also remember learning about augmented reality in digital studies, and I thought I could apply that here, couldn't. But I was like, you know, I'm familiar with some things. So, yeah.

Abby

What would you say like your first year at the DKC was like?

Rusul

Does this include my training semester or my first year?

Abby

I think it can include your training semester and then maybe also your first semester as, like, a full-time consultant.

Rusul

Okay. I will definitely say it was a learning curve. My first semester, so my training semester was very lonely. I wasn't like, paired with anyone. I wasn't scheduled with any newer consultants. So that was good because I actually got to like, pay attention, and do my work. But yeah, and then I would say my first semester after training or my first year after training was definitely a learning curve. Had to learn a lot, had to get used to all these appointments and managing my time, especially with my projects because we were starting to get our projects. But yeah.

Abby

What was, like, something you struggled with at first that feels easy now?

Rusul

Probably my time management. My first couple semesters were a little hard, especially when I was taking on lead roles and handling the hiring committee and workshop stuff. Time management was definitely a little hard in the beginning, but now I feel like I got it. I think probably my junior year, I started kind of just like, if I knew I had projects done, add it to my calendar and make sure I have deadlines for myself, even before I meet with Cartland and Shannon for my check-ins.

Abby

You mentioned your lead roles. You handle the hiring committee and also the workshop committee. Tell me a little bit more about those. How do you get a lead position? How do those function as also being a normal consultant?

Rusul

Yeah, so I think my first lead position was marketing, either marketing or party planning. I think party planning, that's not really a lead position, but yeah. Got into party planning and then marketing. So, I was added into the workshop committee. We used to have these meetings, which were much more official than what you and I are used to, Abby. And then Anastasia graduated. She was at the time the lead of the workshop committee. So, then Trinity and I decided to like, take it on. Then Trinity graduated, so I was left by myself. And so, then I took on the workshop lead. And as for the hiring committee, I was in the hiring committee for two years or three years, I don't know. Three years, yes, three years. And I kind of just, because I was there for so long, no other consultants last semester or last fall, it's a little complicated, but last fall was in the hiring committee this semester. So, then they were like, because I was like experienced with the hiring committee, could lead it so

that I, Angel and I just kind of teamed up and did that together. But I kind of wanted to do all these roles. I kind of had an idea of what I wanted to do when I read the lead descriptions. So, I made sure I put myself in a position where I could achieve that if I wanted to.

Abby

I know you placed a lot of emphasis on like learning to manage your time with all of your lead positions. How do you usually, like, what do you usually do during a shift at the DKC and how long is your usual shift?

Rusul

That depends on the season or what time of the semester it is. Typically, my shifts are about, like, 2 hours to 4 hours. But a typical shift for me would be like clocking in, checking my tasks that I need to do, like, that day. If I have a lot of appointments that I don't typically focus on my like lead roles and like my tasks then, I just focus on the appointments. Sometimes what I'll do though is I'll block out time in my calendar to make sure I work on only my projects or block out time to only work on workshops or only work on hiring committee stuff. So honestly, it really depends. Some shifts toward the beginning of the semester are just like workshop planning, hiring committee planning, and then toward the end of the semester, I don't need to worry about workshops. So, it's just consultants, sorry, consultations, or any projects that I have to get done before the end of the semester. So, I can't really give you a straight answer with that one. It really all depends.

Abby

What do you think makes a consultation session successful?

Rusul

Definitely when a student comes in prepared. Also, when I come into the consultation prepared by reading like the notes that we get. Also, when they leave and they're like, wow, this is actually a lot simpler than I expected. And I'm like, I know. It's just like WordPress, especially, it can get really difficult really quickly. I remember my first time working with WordPress before I worked for the DKC. I was like, what is going on? This is insane. And I spent like 3 hours on it. was insane. And I couldn't figure it out. I booked an appointment with Rachel. Yep. And she helped me through all of it. And I was like, oh, wow; this is so simple. I was like, this is definitely, like, self-explanatory. I can just go to pages. I can just go to "posts" and all of that. So, yeah.

Abby

Do you have a favorite project that you've worked on while you were working here?

Rusul

Probably not a favorite project, but a project that has a special place in my heart is my first official project. I designed the first banner on the Domain of One's Own website.

Abby

And that was [the domain doodles](#)?

Rusul

Yes, the domain doodles. Yeah, so that was, I was very proud of myself. I don't know, I just, it was my first project, and I was like telling my entire family about it and I was like, yeah, if you go on the website, my design is there. So yeah, that's Probably one of my favorites. Yeah.

Ally

It's always good to have something like you can point at and say that "I did that."

Rusul

Yeah.

Ally

I think I actually remember you working on that. Yeah.

Rusul

I did. I worked on that for quite a bit. Yeah. It was fun.

Ally

Yeah.

Abby

What project do you think, like, taught you the most? If you have one.

Rusul

I think when I did a voiceover for the DKC intro video, that definitely taught me the most because I didn't use the soundtrack before then. And I kind of had to figure out how to like record audio, make sure my voice sounded good, and have a script. And that was the first time I was working or first time I worked on a project with Cartland and Shannon where I actually had to do multiple iterations of it because it wasn't perfect the first time. And I was just like; it was a little hard at first to kind of hear the feedback. But once I got the feedback,

fixed my errors or whatever, I was like, okay, this is good. And I probably learned a lot from that. Not just technical skills, but soft skills as well.

Abby

You've already mentioned your leadership roles a little bit, but how has your role changed as you've become a more experienced consultant?

Rusul

Well, as a more experienced consultant, I kind of feel like when a student walks in, and the trainees don't know the answer to the question or the newer consultants don't know the answer to the question. You kind of have like all eyes on you and you're like, oh wow, like I'm actually the senior consultant now. I, actually, I'm supposed to know all of these things. Definitely that, like, I feel like I have a little bit more of a responsibility in this space, especially when Cartland and Shannon leave, and they're like, Rusul, you're in charge. Ollie, you're in charge, right? Yeah. I hope that answered your question.

Abby

I think it did. What has working at the DKC taught you, and what do you think you'll take with you after graduation?

Rusul

That's hard because the DKC has taught me so much. I think probably one of the most important things that I've learned from here is to enjoy what you're doing. I'm very grateful that I get to work or got to work in a space that I can try different things and jump around from leadership position to leadership position project to project and kind of just get an idea of what I want to do in the future. And because of that and because I can do it in a space with low stakes and having supervisors like Shannon and Cartland, who are super open-minded and you go to them with any project you want, they will make it work some way. If you go to them with any skill that you want to learn, they will make it work some way. So, I definitely like and because of that, I've learned I want to enjoy what I want to do in the future and whatever job that I have in the future, at least to some extent.

Abby

Do you have any advice for future consultants or those who might be looking to apply to something like the DKC?

Rusul

Yeah, probably take advantage of the fact that you are young and that this is a very low-stakes environment and you can set your schedule around your classes, the fact that Cartland and Shannon are super open-minded, you should definitely go to them with whatever ideas you have because they can definitely make something out of it. I wanted experience in scheduling. I don't know, just one random thought I had one day and then Cartland offered me to kind of like draft up the fall schedule last semester. And I'm also working on the final schedule for this semester. And that's just something I thought of. It's not even like a work description or your job description. I just thought of it, and I just went to them. So, definitely take advantage of that. Take advantage of all your thoughts and just jump around, try to find something you enjoy, and you can't ever learn too much.

Abby

That's good advice. I think that's the end of my questions. Do you have anything else you would like to share?

Rusul

No, I think I'm all good.

Abby

Awesome.

Ally

Yeah, I'm trying to think if there's anything else specifically that, like, someone who was applying would want to know. Maybe something I'll say is like, I know we kind of talked generally about challenges and like moving through them, right? And so much of what we do is like troubleshooting and like figuring out how to problem-solve. Like, has there been a moment for you where you have been stuck in something like in a situation where, like, you didn't know, sort of, how to proceed and how did you use your resources here to get through that?

Rusul

Yeah, that definitely makes sense. And it happens quite a bit too. Some students will come in with their complicated errors like on their WordPress site, and I have no idea how to fix that. My first instinct is to just look online, see what I can gather on my own, ask my consultants, whoever is working with me. And then I'll ask Shannon. I kind of feel bad asking, but at the same time, it's like I'm here to kind of help these students and my knowledge can't help them, and neither can anyone else that's working. Then I should just go to Shannon and try to see maybe she knows the answer. So definitely using your

resources around you and not, if you don't know the answer to a problem, don't just be like, sorry, I don't know, I'm gonna send you off your way. You know what I mean? Just try to figure it out. If you don't know at the moment, definitely tell them, oh, I'm gonna e-mail, I can e-mail you the answer once I get it. So then at least they're in the loop and that they know that you're actively trying to get them an answer.

Ally

Yeah. And then just this popped into my head. You can be as general or specific as you want, but has there been a project a student has brought in that you've helped with long-term in any way, or something where you kind of got to see both the beginning and the final product or something?

Rusul

Yes, I believe I did help a student record a podcast. They're blind, so I helped them record a podcast. So, I was in the podcast area with them, recorded for them. And after we also edited their podcast. And I've actually done this project with them for multiple semesters. So, it's kind of like nice to see like through my like semesters here, like every couple semesters they'll come to me with a new podcast, and we work together and it's just, it's a great experience.

Abby

This has been the Digital Creator Podcast. You can find a transcript of our conversation and more about this job below. This podcast was produced and edited by me, Abby Firestone, with help from Allie Hamilton and the resources of the Digital Knowledge Center. Are you interested in working as a DKC consultant? Go to dkc.umw.edu for more information on how to apply. Thank you for listening.