

Goodbye Washington!

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I can't believe that my internship with the Department of State is already over! This summer has been amazing for my professional development, and I'm so grateful that I had this opportunity. It just doesn't seem real that my time in Washington for this summer has come to an end.

This summer, I made great strides towards accomplishing my learning goals and objectives. One of my goals from the beginning of the summer was to, "Increase my professional self-awareness by learning more about what type of career I would like to pursue after graduation and the steps that I will need to take in order to have a career in International Affairs." I can definitely say that I accomplished this goal. I know much more about different careers in D.C. than I did before this program, and I

feel confident that I have what I need to ascertain a job after I graduate. I also know a lot more about how different degrees can benefit a career in Washington, and I think I've finally made up my mind about the type of programs I'd like to pursue after my undergraduate degree.

Another goal of mine was to "Enhance my networking capabilities in order to meet professionals that live in D.C. and work in my desired field." Out of all of my goals for this summer, my progress on this goal has made me the most proud. Networking can be daunting, and I would be lying if I said that this goal didn't push me out of my comfort zone. However, by the end of the summer, I have filled out around 40 different names in my networking spreadsheet. I met at least one, usually three or four, professionals every single week. I pushed myself to go out on a limb and just send the meeting request to people that I never would've imagined would have time in their day to speak with me about their careers. This was the most rewarding aspect of my summer. I learned so much about different ways to enter this career, and I proved to myself that I am capable of meeting professionals!

In about a month, I take off for my yearlong study abroad experience. I'm excited to build off this experience by completing an internship in Amman, Jordan. Some of my colleagues here have given me contacts for their friends in Jordan that I can network with, and I'm excited to use my new skill sets in an international context. This internship was a major goal for me, and now that I've completed it, I am already looking forward to my next learning experiences. I am looking forward to my internship abroad because I want to learn more about working across cultures. I am also looking forward to next summer, as I hope to come back to Washington, potentially even to the State Department.

To any student wanting this experience, my advice is to be persistent and confident. If you are confident in your ability to succeed and you do not accept "no" as a final answer, you will be surprised at how far you can get! Again, I'd be more than happy to talk with anyone who might want to do this in the future.

My ideals about gender in the workplace have been challenged by this experience. Diplomacy has not traditionally been a female career. In fact, many female diplomats that I've met have highlighted the unique challenges that come with being a woman in the Foreign Service. However, the most effective and brilliant people that I met this summer were women. Almost all of them found a way to balance their work lives with vibrant personal lives, and I have been told over and

over again that this is almost impossible to accomplish. This gave me a lot of hope. Women are always overcoming obstacles in their careers and the Foreign Service is no exception. Anyone who says that it is impossible for a woman to rise through the ranks while maintaining a happy personal life, clearly has not met some of the senior female professionals that I met this summer. Women are capable of anything, and I can confidently say that my experience this summer reinforced that concept tenfold.

My internship this summer taught me a lot about change making in the government world. I want my career to center around making life better for others, and I was able to do that this summer with the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program. Throughout this summer, everything that I did in my Unit had the end result of making it easier for deserving applicants to get through the process more efficiently. Knowing that my work had this direct impact was really rewarding for me, and I know that in the future, I want my career to have a similar focus on creating positive change around the world.

Thank you again to everyone at Newcomb for making this experience possible for me! I have had the most life-changing summer, and it couldn't have happened without the support of NCI.