

Final Post

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Hi everyone!

I am finally back in New Orleans, eating snowballs and complaining about the humidity. As I prepare to start recruiting and planning events for SFER Tulane, I have been reflecting on my internship experience this summer and how it has affected my perspective on the year to come. I accomplished more than I anticipated this summer, but at the same time there is so much more to be done, especially in terms of SFER Tulane's development. I hope that by the end of this fall semester, I can say that SFER Tulane has impacted both the campus and the surrounding community by increasing awareness and understanding of the unique education system in New Orleans.

I focused my learning objectives on three aspects of this internship: leadership development, career research, and organizational skills (in a personal sense, but also through the activist lens). I am most proud of the connections that I have sought after and made with community organizations in New Orleans, as I believe that those partnerships will firmly establish SFER Tulane as an ally for education-focused organizations, and on a grander scale for students, families, and teachers in NOLA. I hope that we are able to create an engaged student base that wants to get involved in the community, so that these partnerships remain strong. Along those lines, though, my plans to engage with Massachusetts politicians (and thereby learn the necessary skills to do the same in Louisiana) fell through, mostly due to miscommunications in our intern group. The opportunity just to speak with members of a politician's staff excited me, and I am disappointed that I was unable to do so. I have learned from that experience that it is important to take initiative, even if you are new to an organization. I waited for the other interns to delegate the politician-related tasks and help me along in that realm, when I should have been reaching out to the politicians on my own. In my work this semester with SFER Tulane, I will have to take more initiative as a chapter leader, but at the same time I want to provide resources to other students who also want to engage more profoundly in the political (or legislative, or personal) landscape of education reform.

I am also proud of my current work on publishing an op-ed in Louisiana, as I had mentioned in a previous post. I have wanted to explore the world of journalism for quite some time, and even if this piece does not get published, I will have had the experience of crafting an op-ed for a public audience. This is an area that I would like to continue exploring in the next few years, and I believe that my work with SFER will allow for this to a certain extent. Along those lines, I am very excited for the lens that the Tulane Reading Project will bring to education this year. The committee selected [Hope Against Hope: Three Schools, One City, and the Struggle to Educate America's Children](#) by Sarah Carr (who is a well-known education journalist based in New Orleans) as the 2014 book; it explains the complex education system in New Orleans through the eyes of a student, a teacher, and a principal. I hope that the book and all of the associated events this fall will contribute to a greater awareness of NOLA ed reform on campus, and hopefully strengthen SFER Tulane's presence as well.

This internship has also proven to me that incredible opportunities come up when you are working with a team of passionate, driven student leaders. I was invited to

sit in on a meeting that the Massachusetts Language Access Coalition (a group of immigration, education, and legal advocacy organizations) earlier in the summer, and it was incredible to see such a diverse group of leaders work on improving language access in the Boston Public Schools system by developing a meaningful campaign plan. This particular group taught me how fluid the world of activism can be, and how many groups can converge over one issue simply through effective communication of its message. I hope to find similar groups in New Orleans, and have students in SFER Tulane contribute to their campaigns in an effective manner. Through outreach for Tulane's chapter, I connected with [VAYLA](#), and now may be helping them coordinate their new partnership with the Center for Public Service this fall. Again, the networking that can happen simply through communication in the activist world consistently amazes me.

After completing this internship, there are so many things that I want to do. Education reform may seem like a field with a narrow scope, but it is connected to many other issues and fields of interest, and I am excited to explore those connections as SFER Tulane grows. I hope to eventually work with a tutoring organization or directly with a school in New Orleans this year, so that I can better understand the experiences of students and their families. I also know several people who are interested in New Orleans ed reform, but have expressed that they are not sure how to do so. I hope to help them navigate the incredible opportunities that we have as students to explore this aspect of the city, and through that strengthen Tulane's connection to the city.

My internship experience this summer has taught me so much about activism, organization, communication, ed reform, collaboration, and even (sorry to be cheesy!) myself. Though I did not accomplish all that I wanted to, and I still have miles and miles to go with SFER Tulane's development, I am proud of what I worked on with the SFER Massachusetts and SFER Louisiana teams this summer. I am excited to watch the Massachusetts coalition build their next campaign, and I cannot thank them enough for taking me under their wing and making me a more effective changemaker and student leader. SFER Louisiana is still developing, but I know that we will have a strong team of leaders by the end of the semester, and I can't wait to start working with all of them to increase educational equality in New Orleans.