

Sasha Nakae

Graduation Year: Sophomore

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Economics, Theology

Minors(s): N/A

Scholar Group Membership: N/A

Did you received other funding for this project?: CSLC SLA Grant

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Summer Abroad in India

Project Location: India

ND Faculty Mentor: Suman Rani

Project Type: Study Abroad

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Internationalize your Notre Dame experience

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Yes

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Very Much

Tell us about your experience.

Over the course of this trip I took three classes for a total of seven credits: three credits on journalism and society, three credits on religion and cultural identity, and one credit on Hindi language study. These courses took place in english, with a study abroad group of students and professors from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill while we traveled to New Delhi, Hyderabad and ten other cities in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand. During this time we experienced historic sights, marketplaces, cultural dance, Hindu and Muslim worship and places of pilgrimage, public transportation, and engaged in conversation with a multitude of shopkeepers, families, and travelers from across India. My greatest takeaway from this experience would be being invited into the homes and places of worship and being able to participate and engage with the many kind, welcoming, and hospitable people we met on this trip.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

As a student-scholar, I found the experience of taking seven credits while constantly traveling in a foreign country a challenge that pushed me as an academic and as a person. While traveling, we got to witness Hindu and Muslim worship, monuments and movies based on the country's history

of religious violence, and historic and sacred sights of various religions. One of my favorite experiences on the trip was visiting the Nizamuddin Shrine a place for Muslim pilgrimage in Old Delhi, which happened to be the burial place of the saint Amir Khusrau who I did my final project on for my course on Islamic Civilization a few weeks prior. Having studied religious genocide in Bosnia two years ago, visiting places relating to worship and religious tension and studying the influence of religion in India's politics in my courses was very engaging and thought provoking for me as a student and theology major. I was able to learn a lot from my fellow classmates, who often had very thoughtful and provoking ideas and opinions particularly about the experience of being a westerner in country of both great success and development but also poverty and inequality. They also had some very helpful resources and tricks to help me in my Hindi study.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

Upon returning from my study abroad, I look forward to progress in Hindi through independent study and my current task is to find a rigorously challenging program to take up in the fall. I will maintain grow and apply what I learned through my program and assignments as well as continue contact with my summer professors for advice on Hindi language and Indian culture. While on my trip, my classmates referred me to many good resources such as a door into Hindi and some youtube channels, which I think will be very helpful in clarifying grammar questions, which I found to be my greatest language challenge on the trip. My long term goal is to tie in my studies in economics to research on India's rapid growth and development.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

I would highly encourage students to pursue similar projects and to take advantage of the many grant opportunities, such as CUSE that Notre Dame provides. The financial support I received helped make this experience possible, and I believe will have a long term positive effect on my studies as well as who I am as a person. I would encourage students who are going abroad to explore as much as they can, especially in groups because I learned a lot about Indian culture and safety in big cities from my professors, who had a lot of experience leading academic trips to India. At the same time, I would encourage students to not let themselves get too absorbed by the group of people they are with, but to be ambitious in seeking out conversations with the people of their host country, as engaging with the people and cultures that surrounded me will definitely be my greatest takeaway from this experience.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.

snakae@nd.edu

