

Roge Karma

Graduation Year: Junior

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Political Science

Minors(s): PPE

Scholar Group Membership: Sorin Scholars

Did you received other funding for this project?: Balfour

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance? My summer would have been possible without CUSE. I cannot even begin to explain how grateful I am because there are so many students who cannot pursue internships with government for the very reason that they do not get paid. So many students I met in D.C. didn't have nearly the same resources through their Universities as I had through CUSE. As a result, most of the students I worked with were those from well-off households with extra money to spend - a luxury that I did not have. I did not come by many students like me in DC - students who were only able to pursue their dream of interning for the government because of the generosity of their University. I am truly grateful.

Project Title: State Dept. Internship

Project Location: Washington D.C.

ND Faculty Mentor: Steve Reifenberg

Project Type: Internship

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Career discernment and/or preparation

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]: Very Much

[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.

The question that was really underlying my entire experience was how the U.S. government addressed the root causes of conflict and violence all over the world and, moreover, the similarities and differences between conflict resolution theory that I have learned in the classroom and the practices that are actually implemented.

This summer I was in Washington D.C. doing an internship for the U.S. Department of State. I worked in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) where I was part of a team dedicated to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). My day-to-day responsibilities went far beyond my wildest expectations. When I arrived at CSO I was assigned to their CVE efforts in

Bangladesh – a country which, at that time, hadn't experienced any significant terrorist attacks at the hands of transnational organizations. After a few weeks of basic research my entire summer changed for good. On Friday July 1st ISIS operatives took hostage and brutally executed over 20 foreigners at a bakery only a mile away from the US embassy in Dhaka – the capital of Bangladesh. All of a sudden, my entire internship changed. All of a sudden, my responsibilities shifted towards preparing my bosses to go on temporary deployment to Bangladesh to help the Embassy put together a more comprehensive CVE approach to deal with this newfound threat of international terrorist operatives. The work I did was not only substantive but I really felt like I was having a real-life impact on the world: straddling the line between diplomacy and strategic management in a real-world situation. The biggest takeaway was that U.S. foreign policy is moving in a much more progressive direction. While I can't discuss the details of State Dept. operations, there is a general shift from traditional counter-terrorism to a focus on addressing the root causes of radicalization. Certainly a step in the right direction.

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

Thanks to the CUSE program I had an incredible experience this summer through which I was able to better discern for my future career, meet various mentors who will undoubtedly influence my career, and engage in substantive work on a topic I am extremely passionate about. Along with the actual work I did, what made my experience so incredible was the people I met. I had conversations with former and current ambassadors, met Secretary John Kerry, went to coffee with current and former Foreign Service Officers as well as Civil Servants, and met a ton of other students with a thirst for social change. One of the most memorable conversations I had was with Asst. Secretary (and former Ambassador) David Robinson – the head of my entire Bureau. While he is too busy to meet with interns regularly he made an exception for me because he is a Notre Dame grad. Our discussion – which was supposed to last 15 minutes – went on for an hour and we covered topics as vast as the relationship between foreign service and faith, choosing the right career path, and developing a sense of leadership. I can honestly say it was one of the most impactful and profound conversations of my life. This conversation, and others like it, are what made my DC experience this summer truly life changing.

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

One of the main takeaways from this experience was the probability that I will attend grad school for the advancement of my career. Of all the people in my office there was not one who had less than a Masters degree and many had either JDs or PhDs. They had specialized in topics such as conflict resolution, peace and conflict, and international economics - topics that I didn't even know existed beforehand. I also realized that I truly have a passion for public service and I am interested in the foreign service specifically.

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

Allow your experience to go beyond your time in the office. Being in DC and working for the state department opened me up to so many opportunities and people and for that I am so grateful. I went to 3-4 events per week at Think Tanks across DC and met with so many amazing people. My mantra was to never eat lunch alone and as a result I really took advantage of my 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.

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