

Ashley Kyalwazi

Graduation Year: Junior

College: Science

Major(s): Neuroscience

Minors(s): Science, Technology, and Values

Scholar Group Membership: Balfour-Hesburgh Scholars Program

Did you received other funding for this project?: Balfour Hesburgh Scholars Program

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: USA Clubhouse National Conference

Project Location: USA, District of Columbia, Washington D.C., Hilton Crystal City

ND Faculty Mentor: Lisa Anderson

Project Type: Conference - Attendance

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD)

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Yes

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Yes

[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]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

At the USA National Clubhouse conference, I had the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops. Each workshop focused on a particular challenge that is facing clubhouses both on the national and international level. A couple of workshops I attending focused on reaching out to more young adults in our communities who may suffer from mental illness and how we can approach them and let them know that there are communities that want to support them and can give them educational and working opportunities. This was particularly insightful to me, because as a young adult myself, I hope to be able to reach out to more people in the South Bend community so that more people know that our clubhouse exists and is working to provide that home for them to come and to recover. At the conference, I spoke to the CEO of the Clubhouse International, and provided insight for the organization based on what I have seen in my community both at home and in South Bend. This experience enabled me to listen to hundreds of individuals from all across the U.S. talk about their concerns and triumphs as we all looked towards improving the living and working conditions for people living with mental illness.

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

This experience affirmed my interest in mental health and neuroscience. I was very fortunate enough to pick the brains of many experienced individuals in health care, and I plan on using this knowledge as I work with the rest of the board members for the Clubhouse of St. Joseph County to improve our community. I am more determined to find a way to make our community more open to young adults and hope that by the end of my time at ND, the Clubhouse of St. Joseph County will have a greater proportion of young adults coming to interact, learn, and grow alongside many others.

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

I aim to be a physician. Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to be a part of so many great organizations and efforts, such as Special Olympics and Clubhouse International. It is due to these experiences that I have developed a passion for working with and befriending people who have mental illness. Through many of these individuals, I have learned so much and my aim as a physician is to build on all of my experiences and opportunities so that I am able to do greater work for people living with mental illness throughout the world.

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

I advise other students to not let money be an obstacle if you are truly passionate about something. Just talk to people, describing your goals and your rationale. Keep asking questions and make sure that you have a plan in mind for what you want to do and what it will take to get there. Also, don't be afraid to ask for help. The worst that can happen is you get a 'no.' After which, you keep going and find a way to achieve your goals.

