

Roge Karma

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Political Science

Minors(s): PPE

Scholar Group Membership: Sorin, ISP

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? None of this would have been possible without CUSE -- plain and simple. A student from a low-income background like me (with 4 brothers entering college this year) could never have dreamed of completing a government abroad internship. I am truly indebted to CUSE.

Project Title: Internship at U.S. Embassy Rabat

Project Location: U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco

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, 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.

As a Political Officer, one acts as a window into a foreign context for policymakers back in Washington. Our job is to understand local social, cultural and political dynamics, find out how they relate to current political developments and then report this back to Washington in a clear, concise and organized fashion so that U.S. policy towards Morocco can be determined correctly. My main assignments for the POL office were helping put together the 2017 Human Rights Report for Morocco, writing briefing memos for our acting Ambassador to assist her in important meetings, performing media research on important dates (such as the King's annual Throne Day address on July 30th), making trips out to locations like Casablanca, Tangier and Beni Mellal to meet with contacts and evaluate ongoing Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs, and culminating in writing my very own report back to Washington D.C. on the CVE dynamics in a previously unexamined region of Morocco.

As an ECON Officer, our job is to both promote Morocco's economic growth (because it is a

strong trading partner, Morocco's economic development benefits the U.S. through trade and by making Morocco even more stable) and promote U.S. business interests abroad by acting as an intermediary between U.S. businesses and the Moroccan government. In the ECON section, I wrote Diplomatic Notes to the Moroccan government concerning changes in U.S. trade policy, drafted the report back to Washington on Moroccan trade policy with Israel, performed research on Morocco-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) economic and diplomatic relationships (in response to the 'Qatar Crisis'), reviewed applications for corporations applying for funding through the U.S. "Green Fund," and engaged in a larger, long-term project concerned with evaluating the entrepreneurship landscape in Morocco.

In addition, I helped organize a Congressional Delegation visit with the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and two other Congressman on the committee (one of whom was a Notre Dame law graduate). I also participated in many of the Embassy's attempts to engage with the local community. I engaged in various English conversation clubs with Moroccan youth, presented to a group of college-age Moroccans on U.S. history and culture, and organized discussions at Dar America – an Embassy-run facility that provides a space for youth to learn and read English and interact with peers. I also was able to take Arabic language classes through the Embassy, allowing me to further hone my language skills.

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

. First of all, it has significantly improved my written and oral communication abilities, my research skills, and my competency in navigating a foreign environment – all skills that will aid me in whatever career path I choose. Second, it allowed to to hone my Arabic skills in a professional setting. Lastly, this experience not only exposed me to the life of a Foreign Service Officer but also to individuals from all ends of the spectrum of the U.S. Government's foreign policy apparatus. I met with individuals from the Middle East Partnership Initiative, USAID, the Millennial Challenge Corporation, the FBI, Department of Defense, and Public Affairs. Therefore, I now have a huge range of knowledge concerning the possible future career opportunities in government, how to get there, and people who I can reach out to for help

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

This experience has also demonstrated the importance of cultural ambassadorship in promoting U.S. interests and values abroad. Thus, I am currently in the process of applying for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. I have chosen the Palestinian Territories as they speak the most common Arabic dialect and I am already somewhat familiar with the culture and way of life. I will also be applying for a Boren Scholarship to study Arabic in either Jerusalem or Amman, Jordan. If I apply for the Boren I will be taking a 5th year at Notre Dame and literally just focusing on language training for that entire time. For my senior thesis, I am planning to build on my experiences in multiple Arabic-speaking countries and do an evaluation of Arab nationalism. I

would like to answer the question: why did Arab nationalism fail? In terms of my career in the longer term, speaking with so many diverse people in different sectors of government has made me realize that graduate school at some point is a must. I still need to figure out exactly what type of graduate school would be best, but I am leaning towards perhaps international law or conflict resolution.

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

Reach out to people who have done it before. There is too much advice to lay out here. Email me at rkarma@nd.edu

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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