

Takunda Ushe

Graduation Year: Sophomore

College: Arts & Letters, Business

Major(s): Business (undeclared) and Political Science

Minors(s): N/A

Scholar Group Membership: Hesburgh-Yusko Scholars Program

Did you received other funding for this project?: First Year of Studies (FYS)

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance? There was no other office or similar resource on campus with the funding opportunity to cater for my specific research discernment plans. At least, not for a freshman with no prior research exposure and immense appetite to jump right into it with trust and support.

Project Title: Demystifying Mining in Africa

Project Location: War on Want Offices, London Stock Exchange (LSE), Oxford University.

ND Faculty Mentor: Paul Ocobock

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Prepare for national fellowships, 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]: Very Much

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

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

I embarked on a two-week long preliminary research experience to discern a follow-up research focus for my undergraduate journey. This research venture, titled "Demystifying Mining in Africa", served as the founding blocks of my four-year long undergraduate research commitment on subject of natural resource extraction in Africa. I had been inspired by the generous resources offered here at Notre Dame to explore any topic of academic interest through research, and coupling this my background of coming from a small coal mining town in South Africa spurred me forward to take on this research journey.

I carried out two discussions; firstly a renowned Professor of African History at Oxford University, Prof. Miles Larmer, who answered my questioned on the chronological developments of mining and community formation in pre-colonial Africa. Secondly, I met with two officials from

the global economic activist non-profit called War on Want who shared with me the significance of their advocacy projects in the Mining Industries of Latin America and Africa. In addition, I visited the London Stock Exchange (LSE) to analyze the trading of the LSE-listed mining companies in South Africa, particularly AngloAmerican, Glencore and Lomin Mining. I was able to understand the historical evolution of the extractive industry in Africa, the current major challenges the stockholders are battling with, and I came up with some questions I will use going forward. For instance, "Who has the responsibility to ensure the extracted wealth by foreign-based companies benefits the locals?" and "What are the alternatives proposals to avoid foreign-based mining domination in Africa?"

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

This project weighed heavily on me in more ways than I had anticipated. I walked in open to deepening my knowledge on mining in Africa. Little did I know that I would have some fundamental questions about the wholistic orientation of my other academic engagements at Notre Dame. For instance, after visiting Oxford University and having a real-life "Oxford education" through the mentorship of Professor Larmer, I began to ask myself "why I had not yet considered pursuing a postgraduate education at a high profile institution like Oxford?" I would have not have known the possibility of attending Oxford before I had visited it on this trip. More importantly, I learnt that I could find a way to craft all my interests, both academically and professionally into my personal narrative - being an active contributor to African development. The people I met and interacted with during this project, beginning with my research mentors and the professionals I met in London had a mutual interest in helping me to clarify my project and offered their time and intellectual resources. Among many reasons as to why they are doing this, I am certain that one of them is because they strongly support the idea of young people owning their own paths to globally significant engagement with topics that matter, that will not only prepare them to be responsible citizens in our lifetime, but to fulfill our duty in bettering the world.

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

My experience on my research trip to London has cleared the fuzz of how my remaining three years are going to unfold, from my academics to my professional development. I work best when I feel that I am involved in classes and activities that have a cohesive and complementary relationship. Fortunately, my experience helped me to realize how I should attack the opportunity to study at Notre Dame by engaging with literature on my interest topics, attending guest lectures of interest, all with the aim of producing a final thesis that serves as my scholarly contribution. I will use my sophomore year to carve out a research focus, create an ideal principle or idea about the conduct of mining in Africa which I will read relevant literature on, develop details on and make recommendations on by the beginning of my senior year. My search will be of a conceptual clarification nature, as I aim to conduct the empirical dimension of this research topic when I go for my graduate studies. Additionally, I working with my research advisor on potentially presenting my work at a conference later in the year. I want to be a

qualitative research in a business capacity when I graduate for Notre Dame, and this experience has propelled me forward to confidently show my first steps in pursuing such a self-defined career option.

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

I would sum up my advice in three simple points below;

1. Do not be afraid to approach CUSE staff members and faculty with a "unclear" idea on what you want to do. Once you overcome the fear of expressing your research ideas to someone interested in helping you to actualize them, you have won the biggest battle of getting your thoughts into motion.
2. Be ready to have trying moments of discouragement, most likely to be fueled by the insecurity of being inexperienced in a world of well-versed professionals. When you begin to feel small, remember that you have a lot to learn from the "bigger fish in the pond".
3. No idea is ever too weird to put down, as long as it has adequate display of potential intellectual development in retrospect. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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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