

Danica Crowley

Graduation Year: Sophomore

College: Business

Major(s): IT Management

Minors(s): Sociology

Scholar Group Membership: Sorin Scholars, CSC Leadership for Social Change Fellow

Did you received other funding for this project?: Center for Social Concerns

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Ashoka U Exchange

Project Location: Boston, Massachusetts

ND Faculty Mentor: Melissa Marley Bonnichsen

Project Type: Conference - Attendance

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]: Yes

[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]: Yes

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]: Yes

Tell us about your experience.

Attending the Ashoka U Exchange provided me with an another incredible opportunity to grow and develop within the field of social innovation. I was able to learn about more solutions people have created to solve our world's greatest problems, how I can effectively contribute to the social change process, and trends Ashoka fellows have noticed in our global community.

During my time at the Exchange, I attended a number of talks, panels, and networking sessions in addition to Haley House Bakery & Cafe, a local social enterprise that provides a transitional employment program for the recently incarcerated. Through this site visit and from the many conversations I had with other attendees, I was able to witness an truly wide range of real-world examples of social innovation. I think that my main takeaway was that social change can only be truly accomplished through a multi-disciplinary approach and with diverse change teams. Even though IT Management may seem to be removed from social change, I walked away from the Exchange more confident in my ability to integrate my degree with my desire to positively impact the community.

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

Going into the Exchange, I expected my greatest learning to come from listening to panels, hearing the planned lectures, and attending info sessions. While all of these were incredibly helpful and interesting, the main takeaways from the event, for me, came from meeting and eating meals with the people there. I had the opportunity to talk with and hear about the work of incredible innovators who are creating change in the world. Being able to learn more about others' experiences in the social entrepreneurship space has helped me to see how I can integrate my work with social change. I was also able to network with a number of other students who have similar interests, long-term goals, and passions. Having conversations with these students and understanding the work they are accomplishing gave me more ideas of what I could do in the future. (I might be attending a completely student-run social entrepreneurship conference at OSU next year!)

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

As an IT Management major, I hope to, immediately after college, follow the traditional trajectory of a business professional. I will work with a Big 4 firm in order to build up my skillset, increase my exposure to real-world cases, and gain the credibility necessary to be successful. However, I do not want to stay on that traditional path. I want to remain connected to social change, social entrepreneurship, and social innovation. Once I have the necessary real-world experience, I hope to transition out of the traditional sector and into the start-up space, particularly in the space that blends together business and social change. As I look towards this long-term goal, I know that I need to continually learn not only how I can be an effective business leader in my classes but also how I can be an effective changemaker. I believe that attending the Ashoka U Exchange helped me to achieve this.

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

If you are interested in attending a conference, do it! You never know who you are going to meet or what opportunities might pop up. Be open to just listening to what others have to say and learning as much as you can. Conferences are incredible learning experiences as they can help you discern where your interests lie and hear real-world examples of what people are doing in your field of interest.

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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