

Haley Kempf

Graduation Year: Sophomore

College: Science

Major(s): Neuroscience

Minors(s): Poverty Studies

Scholar Group Membership: Sorin Scholars

Did you received other funding for this project?: No

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: “Universal Design: Using Accessible Environments to Build Those Who Are Marginalized Back into Society”

Project Location: The IDeA center at the University of Buffalo

ND Faculty Mentor: Dr. Edwin Michael

Project Type: Creative Endeavor, Preliminary 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 graduate school (MA or PhD), Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), 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]: Yes

[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.

I arrived in Buffalo, New York with a vague idea about built environments and a strong passion for thinking about creative ways to maximize accessibility for people with disabilities. The purpose of my trip was to establish a foundation for understanding universal design in the built environment in order to have the background knowledge for conducting a future project for my poverty studies capstone. While I was there, I was challenged to stretch the way I approached a problem by looking at it from multiple lenses. From my discussion with an architect about building codes and adaptive housing grants to my conversation with a psychologist about incorporating the needs of the people within the architectural space, to my interaction with a graphic designer about building interactive, 3D audio maps for people with visual impairment; It was amazing to see how these people with diverse skills sets were able come together to address myriad sides of the same coin. Additionally, I learned how to decrease the cost of building assistive technology by expanding the target audience and framing it as useful “for all generations.” During another meeting, I learned about the importance of telling the narrative of

people experiencing difficulties with accessibility, as a way of spurring culture change, and I came away with a long list of dynamic books and articles pertaining to disability studies. These experiences are just a few of the many worthwhile encounters I had during my trip.

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

I have never experienced a week so completely packed with new information. While I have always been passionate about advocating for people with disabilities, it was nice to gain a greater understanding of the tangible possibilities for promoting change in this field. This week has led me to consider formulating a seminar at Notre Dame in April to inform students from all disciplines about the role they can play in shaping policies which promote accessibility. I am planning on having professors from different areas of study from philosophy to business to architecture speak to students about how their field can address this issue. Additionally, I would like to set up interactive "impairment scenarios" which allow people to experience what it is like to have to navigate without help from their eyes or a particular limb. Also, it has prompted me to look at how I can play an active role in improving accessibility on campus at Notre Dame. The people that I met with appreciated our discourse on accessibility and many of them noted that they felt it was their duty to educate the next generation. They were especially pleased with the questions I posed, and one even noted that if I knew any good architecture students, who had a similar thirst for knowledge, at Notre Dame I should send them their way.

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

This experience has opened my eyes to the real importance built environments have on who has access to a particular service or space. Also, I learned that the field of accessible design requires a multidisciplinary approach, which I found very enticing. While I was visiting with the IDeA center at the University of Buffalo, I met with the director of the graduate school, who explained different programs they offered. One of these was a double masters in public health and urban planning. Also, they mentioned that with my interest in global health, service, and poverty studies, I should look into the Peace Corps. As I am still discerning between graduate school and medical school, I believe this trip played a critical role in broadening my understanding of potential post graduate programs.

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

I would suggest that students contact the local Notre Dame alumni before their visit. In retrospect, while my housing at an extended living hotel was fine, I think it would have been better to stay with an alumni family who knew the area. Overall, I would encourage students to take the opportunity to seek out knowledge and conversations beyond the classroom. I know that I was surprised by all of the knowledge I was able to soak up within the time frame of a

week.

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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