The World Affairs Council of Atlanta (WACA) is a non-partisan organization that seeks to inform members of the Atlanta corporate, governmental, and general community about international issues by hosting day and evening events. The World Affairs Council of Atlanta hopes to accomplish this goal by inviting individuals, high-ranking government officials from a variety of countries, specialists in particular global topics, and business leaders, to discuss particular world topics. Throughout the year, the WACA collaborates and hosts these programs throughout Atlanta. For example during my internship, I had the privilege to attend a talk by Ambassador Rivkin, the previous Ambassador to France, about the benefits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a discussion by Mark Landler, the White House Correspondent for the New York Times, about the differences between President Obama and Hillary Clinton’s views on foreign policy and America’s role in the world.

As a research intern for the World Affairs Council of Atlanta, I spent nearly all of my time helping Dr. Brown with the Robinson Country Intelligence Index (RCII). The RCII is an interactive tool that utilizes hundreds of variables from various international sources and compares and contrasts a country’s state of governance, operations, economics, and society with other nations. On a daily basis, I worked on the index and advertised the product. I primarily revised the RCII instructional manual (which will inform future interns on how to “pull data”), updated RCII educational quizzes for future RCII users, and beta tested new data for the index. In regards to marketing, I collaborated with both Dr. Brown and other interns on how to promote this program. Using social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, and the already strong WACA website network, we sought to broaden our market and entice possible future subscribers.

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This internship developed my Microsoft Office skills, marketing knowledge (using social media), and communication skills. On numerous occasions, I used Excel to pull data, organize it in an appropriate manner, and prepare it for uploading into the RCII. One of my main tasks during the internship was to update the more than ninety page manual that instructed interns on how to pull data from sources such as the World Health Organization and World Bank. Having to walk through this manual, pull the data from various sources, and make appropriate edits forced me to learn the specific ‘ins and out’ of Microsoft Excel, and I can now confidently navigate the program and use functions such as VLOOKUP and IF. On one particular day in early July, I remember how the interns, myself included, were asked to quickly pull data from a particular source because we had previously found a few data errors in the index. In a matter of hours, I had retrieved the data from the source, processed it, and prepared it for uploading to the RCII (something that I did not know how to do at the beginning of the internship).

In addition to the Microsoft Office skills gained, I also strengthened my marketing and communication skills. Except for a few minor data errors and glitches, the RCII is fully functional and ready for subscribers. Given this, the other interns and I were tasked to promote the product using the WACA’s Facebook page and Twitter. We drafted weekly postings for Facebook that connected RCII graphs and other features with current events and upcoming WACA events, such as a Venezuela’s recent decline and unrest. We were exposed to a wide range of primarily international issues when preparing for these social media posts, and we learned how to succinctly write and market the product given certain constraints, such as audience knowledge and post length. This social media outreach required collaboration among the interns, Dr. Brown, and Michael (the graduate research assistant) to reach a finished product.
Social media outreach taught me the importance of communicating within my group, dealing with constraining deadlines, and learning how to incorporate all desires into one pithy post.

After reflecting on this summer internship, I realize I have learned a great deal about international policy, economics, and Excel while helping narrow my future career goals. As an intern at the WACA, there was frequent discussion about political issues, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, in the United States and reflection on certain countries’ growth/decline over time. I was quickly exposed to these political topics and eagerly asked questions and learned more about these issues. In addition, pulling data for the RCII and marketing the index gave me insight into the current state of countries. For instance, I recall marketing the RCII on social media by drawing attention to Venezuela’s rapid decline in the index and connecting this to an article from the Washington Post. I investigated various topics such as humanitarian and political crises on the RCII, and I learned a great deal about current world events by then using the data to backup news articles and thus market the RCII.

In addition, this internship taught me a great deal about economics as one quarter of the index uses economic data. I recall having to calculate variables, such as aggregate GDP, using excel and data from the International Monetary Fund for the index. Lastly, being an intern at the WACA gave me a working knowledge of Microsoft Office as I frequently used one of these applications on a daily basis. I am now, more than ever, confident about my Microsoft Office skills and my knowledge of international/global issues and policy.

Having had this amazing opportunity to be an intern for the World Affairs Council of Atlanta, I am even more interested in a career that combines political science and economics. From the talk about the merits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership by Ambassador Rifkin to pulling data that shows Venezuela’s deteriorating inflation rate, I thoroughly enjoyed the internship. I
learned there are so many different career paths, in the public and private sector, which use politics and economics. This internship has offered me a great introduction to this field, and I eagerly await next summer when I can continue to explore and learn about possible careers in politics or economics.