Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Biltmore Lake, North Carolina

International Community of Women Living with HIV, Eastern Africa (ICWEA) Uganda

(Emily is pictured second from the right)

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

At the ICWEA I was tasked with a variety of projects. Primarily, I worked on editing, summarizing, and creating documents for funders as well as local members. This included reviewing national budget proposals and creating annual and quarterly reports for the organization. I was also included in helping create social media posts for the organization's Facebook page through photographs and summaries.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

During my time at ICWEA, I was invited on four separate occasions to attend meetings with district level politicians and community members to discuss the sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescent girls and young women. At these meetings my jobs were to photograph speeches given and debates held, take thorough notes, and create "stories" summarizing the meetings which were to be posted on social media and used in reports.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

My primary problem with working at ICWEA was the pace that work was done, which was at a much slower pace than what I am accustomed to. While this could be challenging at times, particularly when I completed an assignment too quickly and no longer had a project to work on, it was manageable. Through Sewanee I have had practice working in groups which in some ways prepared me for work at ICW by teaching me patience. Even though I finish my portion of a project, I must still be patient and wait for others to complete theirs in order to move forward.
In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?
While at ICWEA, I worked very closely with another Sewanee intern, Kathryn. Our strengths and experience differ greatly (Kathryn is a math major with international experience, I am a politics major with health policy experience). While this seemed challenging at first, this opportunity taught me that working with individuals different from me allowed me to learn different skills and look at projects from a completely different view. Overall, together we were able to combine our experiences with math and policy work to create well rounded and thorough results.

How did your internship affect your career plans?
While I have always had a passion for International Health Policy (IHP), this internship allowed me to realize that the way that I want to pursue a career in IHP is through law. While I did not have a chance to work directly on the ICWEA cases, I was allowed to have access to research and be involved in strategy meetings. This exposure allowed me to realize that I, personally, can do the most in health policy through law.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?
This internship threw me into an entirely different culture and allowed me to practice engaging with others that are entirely different than I am. Because my interest is international, having the opportunity to practice engaging with others in different countries is crucial. This opportunity allowed me to realize that while it is natural for individual from western countries (America in particular) to want to apply what they know, particularly laws and customs, to other cultures, it is better to engage as a more background character. While policy may work in our own country, it is not always feasible in others, and acting as if I know best does more harm than good.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:
This internship was everything that I hoped it would be. For years I have been incredibly passionate about International health policy, particularly HIV/AIDS, and this internship opened the door to my future. It has guided me in my career path, given me experience that is incredibly difficult to acquire, and allowed me to explore a world I never believed I would have the opportunity to. From attending international meetings with the Executive Director of UNAIDS (wow!!!!) to seeing a pair of leopards together in a tree (apparently that never happens), this experience was a blessing that was made possible through my funding. I am so grateful for everything I have been given and allowed to experience.