

During my internship I worked in the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Embassies are part of the State Department overseas and represent American interests abroad.

The State Department is a unique organization because it benefits Americans and foreigners all over the globe. The State Department strives to mold and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and to foster conditions for stability and progress for the greater good.

This organization not only ensures security and prosperity for the United States but also promotes American ideals and seeks to provide a better future on a global scale. There are five unique professional tracks within the State Department: Political, Economic, Consular, Public Diplomacy, and Management. Each of these officers plays a specific role in promoting American interests abroad and each are present in all U.S. Embassies.

I worked in the Consular section which was split up into four different subsections: American Citizen Services (ACS), Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU), Immigrant Visas (IV), and Non-Immigrant Visas (NIV). The majority of my time was dedicated to ACS projects and the rest of my time was split between projects for the other three sections FPU, IV, and NIV. Having been tasked with many different projects, I learned to organize and manage my time, including competing deadlines. I was able to use and improve my Spanish language skills daily in the Consulate, with both colleagues and customers.

In ACS, I assisted with citizenship services such as passport intake, reports of birth abroad, death reports, and routine welfare visits to U.S. citizens in prison and hospitals. I also entered information into databases and analyzed it in order to improve the service provided to ACS customers. One database evaluated the efficiency of the appointment system. Another organized

the homicide archives which will become an important historical record. I also worked on updating an approved attorney's list for American Citizens with one of my Honduran colleagues. The Ambassador requested an information campaign for newly arrived U.S. tourists in major Honduran airports and sea ports. I was responsible for organizing the campaign, which presented ACS's emergency contact information and suggested travelers register themselves with the Safe Travel Enrollment Program (STEP) while traveling in Honduras.

With the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) I worked on updating a mobile phone application for both iPhones and Androids. Many applicants have trouble filling out their own application for many different reasons and end up applying fraudulently. The app with the updates will limit the amount of fraud in Non-Immigrant visa applications. With the Immigrant Visa Section (IV), I attended policy meetings between the Government of Honduras and U.S. Embassy agencies. I was responsible for taking notes and writing cable reports to update Washington D.C. on the outcome of the meetings. Going through this process gave me a better idea of how Officers in Embassies develop policy overseas and the roles of varying agencies. One of my favorite projects was preliminary visa intake, with the Non-Immigrant Visa Section (NIV). For an hour each day I communicated, in Spanish, with Honduran visa applicants reviewing with them their application information to ensure a faster interview process for the Consular Officers.

As part of my internship I was able to attend a discussion for first tour officers, led by visiting Counselor to the State Department, Thomas Shannon. He spoke about his extensive career as a Foreign Service officer, current global foreign policy trends and what he projected to be important in the future. The topics Counselor Shannon discussed as well as the questions that

the Officers asked during the session showed me that having a rich global perspective is a key to success. When I realized my knowledge of the world was still taking shape and I wasn't as experienced as my Foreign Service colleagues, I hit a low point. However I quickly realized my objective for the summer was to grow and to learn, which I had. That really was the high point of my experience at the State Department: I refined my world-mindedness and broadened the perspective with which I look at the world with and that had been my goal. Through the various projects I completed I was exposed to a more multifaceted view of a range of foreign policy issues. I feel a huge amount of gratitude for the opportunity to gain working experience in a career I know would be fulfilling. I encourage other students to seek out State Department internships overseas and expand their thinking about themselves and the world.

This experience has given me confidence in my ability to work abroad or at home in almost any environment I put my mind to. I took advantage of the opportunity to travel as much I could and get to know Honduran culture. I also was able to make friends with a variety of different people who worked in the Embassy, all of whom were older and more experienced than me. I learned to be self-reliant and trust in my ability to succeed in new and complex situations. I was not only capable of managing my experience in Honduras on my own but also really enjoyed taking on the challenge. This ability is one that I can bring back not only to Sewanee but also to future endeavors.

My internship at the U.S. State Department exposed how restricted my thinking about selecting a career had been. I spoke with a range of people who had come from a variety of backgrounds before joining the State Department. Some of my colleagues even worked for other

U.S. government agencies that work in Embassies abroad. I have certain goals for myself; to work with people using foreign languages, to be challenged daily and advance my world mindedness. My colleagues and friends in Honduras showed me that State Department is only one of many potential jobs I can consider applying for after completing my undergraduate degree.