

Summer Internship Report 2017

Flower Turcsan, C'17

Hometown: Debrecen, Hungary



**Permanent Mission of Hungary
to the United Nations
New York, New York**

(Flower is on the left)

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

This summer I had the opportunity to work in the United Nations in New York. I was working as an advisor for the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN, covering a vast array of topics and issues. I attended Security Council meetings and briefings, reporting back to the home office on North Korea, counterterrorism, Syria, and Myanmar. I researched and devised policy recommendations on several topics and subcommittees for the Mission. I represented my Mission in the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, which passed its annual resolution this past month. I also assisted the President and the Foreign Minister during their visit to New York for the High Level Week of the General Assembly.

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?

How did I make a difference? When I think about the long-term goals of the UN such as creating a peaceful and inclusive world, I can't stop but wonder if I did anything that might help the organization achieve those seemingly impossible goals. Fortunately, I had an amazing support system in the office and they helped me get over the "NGO blues", as they called it. We all have those moments when it feels like no matter what we do, it won't make a difference. However, if you turn your attention away from the big picture and look at the work in front of you, all you see is progress. For example, the Working Group on the Revitalization of the GA in the past two years improved the work of the UN in ways that only a few years ago seemed just as hopeless as world peace. Year by year, little by little, through weeks and months of work and compromise, the UN is changing and evolving to better fit contemporary times.

If I had to give specific examples of the difference my work may have made, I would have to say it is not here yet. Most of the work I've done was in the shape of policy recommendations and proposals. For example, I was involved in the Mission's campaign for a seat on the UN Women's Executive Board, an amazing organization within the UN system focusing on women's empowerment and gender equality, among many other important projects related to women. While I feel like I helped create a strategy that will likely win the necessary votes, we won't know until next year. In terms of professional and technical skills, I was able to gain insight into the process of passing a resolution in the UN: the format, the content, whether or not it will be cost-neutral, the direction it might take in future resolutions, whether or not to use agreed language, and how will it affect existing resolutions. I once participated in a 3-hour conversation regarding a single word in a 100-page resolution. Every single detail must be examined and agreed upon before the draft is ready for passing.

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?

The research skills on which we put so much emphasis at Sewanee always come in handy, no matter where you work. Sometimes I had to familiarize myself with a completely new topic, such as wildlife trafficking, which was not my focus at Sewanee, yet I had one day to catch up on everything wildlife and the opinions of various organizations and states, how current laws and agreements affect the resolution draft in front of the committee, and what the latest research is on the topic. I had the skills to learn all that, thanks to Sewanee. To be fair, the only responsibility I had was solving problems- the UN is an organization focused on problems and finding ways to resolve them, or at least contain the situation. Fortunately, Sewanee prepares you for that: we learn how to think outside the box, and how to address situations we might not have specific experience in. Obviously, I had extensive knowledge about most of the issues I worked on because Sewanee also makes sure you are prepared with facts and information. I remember asking my professor why we spent so much time on a single UN resolution in class while there were so many others to explore. Then, three days into my internship, I was sending thank-you notes to him because that resolution was mentioned during every single meeting I attended!

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

The High Level Week of the GA is probably one of the most stressful weeks at the UN. There are 190+ Crown Princes(ses), Presidents, and Foreign Ministers walking around, meeting with each other, giving speeches, attending side events, giving press briefings, and so much more. My Mission had both the President and Foreign Minister attend the High Level Week, which meant coordinating two entirely different schedules, making sure Secret Service is notified of every single detail of the day, making sure there are no gaps in the schedule. It's really a time when you have to be at four different places at the same time and even that isn't enough. Communication and cooperation within the team were essential, yet at times difficult.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I was reassured in my knowledge that this is exactly what I want to do. I have found my place in the world, working with people who share my values and hopes for the future and who work tirelessly to make that a reality. I am leaving the UNHQ building today with renewed energy and passion and the knowledge that I will be back.

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 is a difficult question to answer because all I did was collaborate with people of different backgrounds and make sure that all involved see the UN as a safe space where they can share their perspectives. I loved going to work and learning about 193 countries and countless other members of the UN system, and I loved hearing people switch languages mid-sentence and knowing that is completely acceptable, and almost expected, in that environment.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

I cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity! This summer was an amazing experience which I will cherish for the rest of my life. I had the opportunity to learn from and work with the scholars and public figures I've read about at Sewanee. I was able to share the findings from my Sewanee thesis and have it sent to the UN office that focuses on that topic. I wish I had the words to express how the past few months were a dream come true and how I will work tirelessly to be able to come back and continue the work I've begun here!