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Buenos Aires, Argentina
Summer 2015

This summer I had the remarkable opportunity to intern with the Foreign Commercial Service in Buenos Aires, Argentina. FCS, housed in U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires, is a branch of the Department of Commerce focusing on international trade promotion and counseling. Basically, this means they try to help American companies looking to export their products to foreign markets, which they do through providing companies with market research, setting up meetings with potential local partners, and assisting with the navigation of government regulations. The Foreign Commercial Service is also in charge of operating SelectUSA, a government initiative aimed at presenting the United States as a great place for foreigners to invest/start business operations (I didn't work much with SelectUSA, though).

As an intern, my day-to-day jobs at FCS varied quite a bit. Some days I would be tasked with calling a list of Argentine businesses and officials on behalf of the Embassy. Other days I would translate documents and newspaper articles for our trade counseling reports. I helped edit and compile the weekly CS Highlights reports that were sent to Washington, and by the end of the internship I had even helped draft a couple of briefing memos for the Ambassador. I was able to conduct my own market research, which I compiled into two comprehensive reports—one on the Argentine satellite industry and one on defense aviation—that were then sent to U.S. companies. I helped the Specialists with organizing trade shows, worked with sponsors for the Embassy's 4th of July party (which was actually an insane, insane, insane amount of work...totally worth it, though), and got to attend a Strategic Planning conference with the Foreign Commercial Services from Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, along with the

Department of Commerce's Deputy Assistant Secretary. I also sat in on quite a few meetings with our Commercial Officers and both local and American businesspeople; this provided me with an excellent opportunity to witness American trade policy actually being implemented and gain a behind-the-scenes appreciation for how international business deals are organized. There were other interns at the Embassy as well working with the State Department, and so we were able to spend time in other departments getting to know Foreign Service Officers and seeing how different parts of the Embassy operate. For example, one day I worked in American Citizen Services and assisted with visa applications in the Consular section.

In some ways, of course, the internship was an internship, so answering phones, making excel spreadsheets, and even wrapping presents fell within the scope of my responsibilities at one point or another. That said, even the tasks that seemed menial at first ended up providing me with incomparable exposure and experience; calling a list of businesses and answering phones might not have translated directly into tangible results but ended up being great practice speaking Spanish in a professional setting (frankly, it doesn't get much more professional than speaking to someone on behalf of the United States Government).

Speaking of Spanish, one thing I want to quickly mention is how important Spanish proficiency is for this internship. I've studied Spanish for over ten years and spent a summer in a Spanish-speaking country in high school, so I was confident in my language abilities heading in. Even so, there were times when I found myself sort of floundering, especially on the phone. "Embassy and Government Work" is a vocab section that doesn't make it into most Spanish textbooks. I had to think on my feet a lot and sometimes try to explain a program or project that I didn't even know how to explain well in English—and technically I was a representative of the U.S. Government! The Commercial Officers didn't cut us any slack because we were interns;

they expected us to be able to speak to anyone professionally and courteously on behalf of the Embassy, regardless of which language we were using. Combine that with the translation duties often assigned to us, many of which were really technical (think aviation science), and it's hard to overestimate how crucial an advanced level of Spanish is working at FCS.

This internship allowed me to mature personally and professionally in multiple ways. Since I was working, this was by no means a vacation/months-long party like studying abroad can sometimes be. This gave me a more realistic idea of what daily life would actually be like if I chose to live and work abroad in the future. Furthermore, working at the Embassy was incredible for dozens of reasons, but one that I really appreciated was the chance to get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what it's like to be a Foreign Service Officer and the unique challenges of working for the U.S. Government overseas. I went into the internship thinking that being an FSO might be a career that I would be interested in pursuing, and while I don't think this career path is necessarily for me after getting the inside scoop, I was grateful for the rare opportunity to explore the Foreign Service lifestyle before committing to it. Plus, since Argentina's government heavily controls the country's economy, the Economics student in me was fascinated to witness how government intervention at the macro level translates to standards of living at the micro level. This type of intervention and its consequences are hard to observe in the relatively laissez faire United States, and so the chance to speak with Argentines about their opinions regarding the government's economic decisions allowed me to observe subtle intricacies that no textbook could convey.

On a more skill-based level, my professional research, writing, and communications abilities all improved dramatically over the course of the summer. Having drafted memos for the Ambassador and Commercial Officers, I learned to prepare professional documents effectively. I

honed my research skills working on International Partner Search projects, and through daily interactions with everyone from visa applicants to businesspeople to government officials, I gained a sense of how to conduct myself professionally in virtually any setting. This sort of intuition can only come from experience. These are only a few of my many projects and lessons learned over the summer, and I figure if I managed to do all of this in Spanish, doing it in English in the future shouldn't be an issue!

As far as my helping FCS, I believe I did make a noticeable impact. I think I was able to personally help out nearly everyone in the office with one project or another, and my availability to help out as random odd jobs popped up was a real benefit to the FCS team. I will also give a special shout out to my partner in crime, Meghan, who was vital to organizing the sponsors for the 4th of July party. All in all, our presence was well appreciated.

Interning with the Foreign Commercial Service in Buenos Aires was really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compliment my academic studies in a professional setting, gain experience working in international trade, and explore a new part of the world. The entire experience, minus a few (expected) hiccups here and there, was outstanding. This internship is going to open doors for me professionally, certainly, but the relationships I formed and the incomparable life experiences I had are what made this summer one of the best of my life. (My mom put it nicely: "So, what exactly are you planning on doing next summer since you sort of peaked already?") I am truly grateful to Kellogg for giving me the chance to pursue this internship and would absolutely encourage anyone interested in applying to do so—you won't regret it!