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Foreign Commercial Service
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This summer I spent ten weeks as an intern with the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Foreign Commercial Service is housed within the US Embassy in Buenos Aires and essentially works to promote trade relations between the US and Argentina on behalf of the US Department of Commerce. As an intern, I worked with different Commercial Specialists to complete projects that related to a wide range of industries, products, and clients. My workload was typically quite varied, which really allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the many services that the FCS provides.

More specifically, I typically juggled three to four major projects at a time while also attending to daily office tasks, such as answering phones and translating documents. For example, I compiled and edited the office's submissions for the Secretary of State's ACE Award, arranged and led a meeting with the Argentine Green Building Council to discuss the future of green technology in Argentina, and edited market research reports for the Processed Foods and Gaming and Casinos sectors. I also completed extensive market research using NOSIS import software to gather data on the market potential for US exports from various products, including industrial equipment, chemical solutions, and construction products. In addition, I worked with a fellow intern to contact over forty Argentine firms via telephone to gauge their interest in an American electronic product and successfully scheduled several meetings for our American client's trip to Argentina. I also followed-up on several trade leads on behalf of both Argentine and American clients.

Furthermore, I was also able to work extensively with the American Chamber of Commerce's (AmCham) branch in Argentina to complete several short-term projects. While at

AmCham, I contacted nearly seventy companies via telephone to promote AmCham's annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) award. In addition, I worked with AmCham's communications coordinator to develop improved promotional materials for an upcoming event, contacted local non-profits to assess donation opportunities, and prepared a formal report on e-waste legislation in the US. I was also invited to attend several of AmCham's international trade committee meetings and worked during AmCham's annual fourth of July reception.

I immensely enjoyed my time in Argentina, both within the US Embassy and at AmCham. I loved being immersed within the Argentine culture, and personally benefitted from ample opportunities to use my Spanish skills. I also really enjoyed getting to know the specialists and was always impressed by the large body of institutional knowledge that they were willing to share with me. The specialists had no qualms about giving me significant responsibilities and letting me interact directly with Argentine businesspeople, which is part of what made my internship such a good learning experience.

Although ten weeks is a relatively short amount of time, I do feel that the FCS benefitted from my contributions, largely based on the frequent praise and number of positive comments that I received from my various supervisors. Each specialist was very complimentary of my efforts and continually reinforced that I was doing a good job. Although it was occasionally frustrating that business interactions in Argentina don't proceed with the same speed and urgency as similar interactions in the US, I do feel that I was able to effectively advocate for our American clients and ultimately delivered positive results. I feel that I left the FCS with a number of major projects that I will be able to reference as part of my career portfolio. I also thoroughly enjoyed working at AmCham, which was an entirely different work environment from the FCS and presented a good example of an authentically Argentine workplace.

I cannot even begin to describe all that I learned as a result of my internship, especially in regards to Argentine economics and politics. Current Argentine trade policy presents a number of significant challenges for US exporters and it was fascinating to see the real-life effects that these policies have on both the domestic Argentine economy and US interests abroad. I also benefitted greatly from such prolonged exposure to the Spanish language, and my Spanish speaking skills improved immensely as a result. Finally, I was able to learn a great deal about the inner workings of the State Department and Embassy system through extensive conversations with various Foreign Service Officers, which helped me to consider the Foreign Service as a potential career path. As a result, I now feel prepared to enter the job market with a strong professional skill-set.

In addition to these concrete facts and skills that I picked up during my internship, I also benefitted significantly from exposure to the distinct Argentine way of life: I adapted to the Argentine accent and used *lunfardo* slang words, learned a few steps of tango, and adjusted to eating dinner absolutely no earlier than 10pm. What perhaps surprised me most was my own ability to create my own “family” in Argentina, even though I was thousands of miles away from home. At first, it sounds absolutely terrifying to fly halfway around the world to live alone in a foreign country, but after only a few days, I found myself settling in and beginning to make what I hope will be life-long friends. For me, this internship experience has alleviated a lot of my own anxieties about graduating from college and entering the real world: I have emerged from this experience with a new sense of self-confidence and the knowledge that I am resilient enough to thrive in almost any situation. This internship was an incredible experience, and I recommend this opportunity to anyone that is looking for a fascinating, rewarding, and fun summer.