City of San Antonio International Affairs Department  
203 South St Mary's, Suite 360  
San Antonio, Texas 78205  

Contact person: Chief of Protocol, Mr. Jose Maria Vega

Last summer I interned at the City of San Antonio International Affairs Department. My supervisor was Ms. Elena Villarreal, however she has since left the office, so in case of any questions you can contact Mr. Jose Maria Vega who is currently Chief of Protocol.

The department’s goals and objectives are to develop international relations with other regions, to promote economic development of the city of San Antonio, and to attract foreign direct investment. The department tries to establish ties with other cities and countries through a few different ways. For example the City of San Antonio has a Sister-City Program which works with cities all over the world. The department acts on the behalf of the city as the official foreign liaison between San Antonio and participating members. The department works very hard to expand the number of the cities who participate in this program, and last year Chennai became of the Sister-Cities of San Antonio. The City of San Antonio International Affairs Department helps make it easy for the people interested in pursuing business or any other opportunities by making important information available, organizing cultural events and trade, education and diplomatic missions and visits. Also the CSAIAF advises elected city officials and the businesses on the official international protocol and provide training on cross-cultural communications and etiquette. All of this resulted with San Antonio receiving the Sister Cities International’s Best Overall Program Award at its 50th Anniversary Conference. The Sister City Program is a very important one for San Antonio as it helps enrich the cultural community of San Antonio and helps develop the city economically by attracting direct foreign investment. Also it helps with
exchanging sponsorships which help the schools, ethnic organizations, citizen groups and corporations. This makes it easier for groups and organizations to initiate and establish relationships with/in San Antonio as the Sister City Program facilitates the process. Therefore most of these programs have a counterpart in one or more of the Sister Cities.

The Foreign Affairs Department also provides trade services. The department educated and advises companies who try to find potential partners or business opportunities in other countries. The department tries to match the needs/requests of the companies and provide them with lists of possible international business matches. This networking allows for more business to be done and for trust to be established between San Antonio firms and other businesses in other regions. The department organized 2-3 days business missions which include business matchmaking, communication assistance and transportation. The CSAIAD is also a direct link to Mexico, providing logistical and communications support to companies interested in exporting products and services to Mexico. This helps develop international partnerships between San Antonio and Mexico that many times establish a strong mutually beneficial connections between the companies. Also San Antonio has a very strong relationship with Japan since 1985. The city of San Antonio was introduced to the powerful industrial leaders in Japan and has obtained a lot of foreign investment from this relationship and other benefits. CSAIAD has helped many various companies to establish their business goals; these companies include such big names as Sony Microelectronics and Toyota Motor Manufacturing.

During my internship in the International Affairs Department I assisted Elena Villarreal and other workers such as Jose Maria Vega and others with their daily assignments and events. I did a lot of research on different sister cities and a lot of match making for the coming delegations. I had to search through lists and databases of companies and make sure they were
compatible with what the clients were looking for. I also helped meet the delegation from Japan and Korea. With the Korean delegation we went down to the City of San Antonio Water Department and were shown how the River Walk was built and what effect it has had economically. It was a very interesting experience. I also helped in organizing the Export Trade Leaders trip to Mexico. I created files for all of the companies that were going to Mexico and did research on every single one of them, starting from their history to their interests and business details. I then matched them with potential companies in Mexico, which were then narrowed down to the few they were going to meet. I had to work on the itinerary and create packets and hand outs for all the participants in this trip. It was a quite challenging and time consuming task but I felt very accomplished when I achieved it after hours on the internet, email and phone.

I also worked was put in charge of corresponding with some organizations and people who were interested in visiting San Antonio. For example I had to work with an Ethiopian Quarry and an African ambassador. It was a very enriching experience since I learned about international etiquette and correspondence and got to do unusual research. Besides these highlights there were a lot of assignments that involved organizing and updating directories, setting up meetings and working out schedules.

I feel that my work at the International Affairs Department was of very good quality and was done in good time. I was very motivated to work and even when I finished my working hours for the internship I still went to work for another week or two, because I wanted to finish up a couple of things and have the opportunity to learn more things. For me this was a wonderful experience and I learned a lot of things that relate directly to my major and actually got to see how all the things I have learned at Trinity are put together and work in real life. Many things I didn’t understand before, made much more sense to me after the internship. Also I got to meet
many knowledgeable people and experience how it feels like to work in an office and how to be professional and ethical every day of one's work. I think this will greatly benefit me in my future profession as well as in future studies. I hope that the department enjoyed having me as much as I enjoyed working for it.