Internship Paper:
San Antonio Council for International Visitors

This semester, I worked at the San Antonio Council for International Visitors. The mission of this organization is, "to offer, as a service to the community of San Antonio, an opportunity for our citizens to further their understanding about people of other countries, to discover and appreciate the variations in all cultures that both bind and separate us, and to openly lend insight about ourselves in a free and candid manner to all those visitors who seek to discover more about us." My supervisor at S.A.C.I.V. was Mrs. Irma Reyes, and she can be reached at Irma is the founder and executive director of the council and has been working there for thirty years, so I could not have had a more experienced or more knowledgeable person leading me in my first experience working in the international studies industry.

My first project of the semester was to print, address, and mail invoices to all of the members of S.A.C.I.V. While this at first seemed like a menial task, as I continued to work on it I became more aware of its values. I was able to see the names and jobs of all the members of the organization, and it gave me a good idea of the wide range of interests the people involved in the organization have. I was also able to gain a better understanding of the financial requirements that are essential for running a business. While undertaking this task I believe I was very efficient in finishing the work in a timely manner, and trustworthy in dealing with financial issues.

My next project, and by far the most important of the semester, was helping to organize the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar. My first task in this project was to organize
and condense biographical information on the more than 150 scholars who were attending. I was sent a lot of raw data from the coordinators in Denver and Washington D.C. and I needed to modify the information into a usable format so that it could be uploaded onto the S.A.C.I.V. website. I believe I accomplished this task in a timely and satisfactory manner, and Norman St. Clair, the webmaster, was very happy with my work.

My most important role in the Fulbright project was coordinating home hospitality visits for each of the 150+ visitors. It was a daunting assignment and I had to be very organized. I had to keep everything straight concerning who was hosting who, where the visitors were from, and at what time they would be hosting. I received and continue to receive a lot of praise on my success in this task. Every visitor received a home hospitality placement, and every person who inquired about hosting was assigned at least two visitors. This part of the seminar was the most successful and enjoyable for everyone involved.

The most rewarding part of the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar was when I actually interacted with the visitors themselves. I was first able to do this at the welcome dinner, which included all of the Fulbright scholars as well as many S.A.C.I.V. members and State Department employees. It was fascinating to me to talk to people with wide ranges of areas of study, and to meet highly educated people from all corners of the globe. This experience was valuable to me because I want to go into diplomacy, and during this evening I was able to witness people from all different political and social backgrounds getting along great.
The following night I attended the distribution of the scholars to their home hospitality hosts. This was a very rewarding night for me because I got to see the final results of all my work in organizing and coordinating the hosts and visitors. I was also very fortunate to be invited to Irma’s house to attend her home hospitality night. While I was there I met and talked with people from China, Japan, Mongolia, Greece, Uganda, and Ukraine. We discussed everything from politics, to travel, and even Facebook. It was an unparalleled experience for me, and I gained insight into the lives of everyday individuals from around the globe. Going into the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar project, I knew that this was the third year that the seminar was taking place in San Antonio, and therefore I knew that expectations were high. On the night of the home hospitality visits, I knew that I had successfully fulfilled all off my duties in organizing these very highly anticipated visits.

One project that I had to do continually throughout the semester was to prepare information packets for incoming visitors. This ongoing project has been beneficial to me because I have been able to see who actually comes to San Antonio, and from where. This project has also helped me to better familiarize myself with what S.A.C.I.V. is trying to accomplish by welcoming and hosting these visitors. I know that it is very useful to inform visitors about the culture and history of San Antonio, as well as the history and mission of the organization. I believe I have done a very good job on this particular project because I always have the required number of packets completed on time or even ahead of time.

My final large project of the semester was to update the resource database to include the most recent contacts. In undertaking this project, I was able to see how the
organization has grown since the early 1990's. I was also able to observe the sheer volume and variety of resources and visitors that have been utilized over the years. From education, to law enforcement, to immigration, I was very interested to see the wide range of careers and areas of interest that the visitors were involved in. I was also able to see specifically who comes to San Antonio, from where, and why. I also read about what other countries they had visited and what other languages they spoke. I was very productive in this task as well, and I even finished it in less time than Irma originally expected it to take.

My internship at the San Antonio Council for International Visitors has been rewarding for me in many ways. Not only have I been able to see how this local organization works, but I have also witnessed how it interacts with larger organizations like the State Department and the National Council for International Visitors. I believe I have been an important contributor to the organization during my time there, and I have helped them to complete and smoothly run several programs. I have very much enjoyed and appreciated my time there, and I believe it will contribute greatly to my future international affairs career.