Entry Information

Title of Entry: Diversity, Academics, and Research: My Dornsife Experience

Statement – typed 250 words or less describing the meaning behind your entry and what inspired you. Use the space below or attach a typed document to your submission form.

I was inspired to enter this contest by the diverse research experiences I have had at Dornsife. These experiences, in addition to the other academic resources available to students, have provided me with an enriched learning experience. The meaning behind my entry is my desire to share my Dornsife story, to show how many wonderful opportunities are available to students in Dornsife. Whether it is undergraduate research grants, the ability to connect with top faculty, the encouragement of diversity, or academic challenges, Dornsife pushes its students to take their learning experience beyond the classroom to become diversely educated students.
Diversity, Academics, and Research: My Dornsife Experience

A Dornsife student is someone who challenges his or herself academically, who is diverse, and who contributes humanitarianly to the community. I embody this Dornsife spirit in my fields of study, academic achievements, and research experiences, and I am excited to share them with you to inspire future generations of Dornsife students in what it means to be apart of this faculty.

Dornsife means diversity. As an International Relations major with French and Economics minors, I took a wide variety of classes that might seem to have little to do with each other. My major and minors, however, combine to make me a more educated student of International Relations with a larger variety of skillsets. This semester I was honored with the opportunity to work with Professor of Economics Jeffrey Nugent on a Directed Research Project. Professor Nugent is creating a dataset of protest-response events during the Arab Spring in all participating countries, and is also looking at stock market and exchange rate fluctuations to find any correlation between the political and economic sides. I have never had a class with Professor Nugent, but I was interested in working with an Economics professor to improve my quantitative research skills and also to learn more about the effects of the Arab Spring. Professor Nugent himself was excited to have me on board as all the other research assistants had purely economic, and no International Relations, backgrounds. Right away I contributed my International Relations knowledge of useful databases, techniques, and insights for looking into not only economic but also political situations. My International Relations training proved useful, as I knew to look for not only economic indicators but also for international responses to protests, and how these might impact the domestic politics of the countries being analyzed. My diverse fields of study connected even further as a couple weeks into my work with Professor Nugent he turned to me and said, “Wait. You can speak French right?” I replied stating of course,
considering I was a French minor. Since I was coding data on Tunisia, a francophone country, Professor Nugent was ecstatic that he could have me read articles in French from local publications and add them to the growing dataset. I am now reading International Relations related articles in French, and coding them in an Economic manor into a dataset. This is what it means to be a Dornsife student: studying three diverse fields and combining them seamlessly to work with a top faculty member on innovative research.

Academic excellence is another quality of a Dornsife student, and it comes in the form of both grades and drive. I have worked hard to maintain a near perfect GPA throughout my college career, but what is even more important is that I have challenged myself throughout the journey. I studied abroad at Sciences Po in Paris, a school known as one of the toughest in France and known as USC’s toughest study abroad programs. I minored in Economics and French in order to give myself a competitive edge when I graduate and to broaden my understanding of International Relations, when I could have chosen to simply major in International Relations and fill my timetable with electives. I decided I wanted to graduate with honors, so I wrote a senior thesis about gidsland (guiding) states of 111 pages. Even in the last semester of my senior year I continued to challenge myself by using my last elective space by taking a PhD level International Relations course entitled “Foreign Policy Analysis.” A Dornsife student is someone like me, who does not simply take course after course, but who strategically and passionately chooses courses to enhance their academic experience.

A Dornsife experience is not complete with participation in research. My research experiences have defined my undergraduate career and I cannot emphasize enough how much research has enhanced my learning experience at USC. During my four years at USC, I received two SURF and SOAR research grants which aided me in both my independent and research
assistant endeavors. Independently, I researched the background, components, and future of the human rights norm the Responsibility to Protect, which states that countries have a responsibility to protect the global community from the most heinous violations of human rights. This research, cumulated in a published article in the Southern California International Review (SCIR), and allowed me to then serve as Dean Steven Lamy’s research assistant on the topic for two years. I also published another article in the SCIR entitled, “The Internet as a Fundamental Human Right,” which was inspired through my internship experience at UN Watch and listening to daily UN Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva, Switzerland. There is a general theme to each of these research projects: they all have to do with humanitarian ideals. I love conducting research, and the most satisfying and rewarding part is knowing that my fellow peers are learning, from my writing, what it means to protect human rights in the 21st century.

What drives me throughout my studies at Dornsife are the wonderful opportunities available to students who work hard and excel in what they love. For me, researching about the normative side of foreign policy has allowed me to connect with top faculty, and explore diverse facets of both my major and minors. Diversity is key to any Dornsife student, and my experience as research assistant to Professor Nugent embodies this. Academic excellence is also another important quality of any Dornsife student, but it is even more important to continuously challenge oneself. I have tried to participate in as many of the amazing opportunities available at Dornsife, whether it be working with Dean Lamy or Professor Nugent, having a major and double minor in diverse areas of study, or conducting research aimed at educating others on the importance of protecting human rights globally. I am Dornsife because I utilize Dornsife’s resources to enhance my educational experience, and to enhance the learning experience of my peers through my research and publications.