

August 2018

Reflections from Brynn April

Dear Jack,

While you instructed me to write a summary of my experiences this summer, I was already planning on writing you a thank you note. The experiences of past few weeks would not have been possible without the opportunity you've provided me. I've decided to integrate my summary with my thank you letter, because one would be impossible without the other.

In thanking you, I remember all the incredible things that I got to see and do. Of course, the UN is a major component that sticks out in my mind. Just being there, surrounded by powerful and intelligent people and hearing what they had to say, blew my mind every single day. Here I am, a 5'0" tall undergraduate student from Long Island, suddenly finding myself being introduced to diplomats and wearing a UN grounds pass around my neck. I got to walk around like I belonged there. Because, this summer, I DID belong there. I was there to make a difference. Let me tell you – I loved every second of it.

Aside from the UN, I gained experiences with people. It's one thing to talk about policies, laws, groups of people, and to have carefully-made PowerPoint, speeches and statistics. But, it's another thing entirely to actually get to talk to the people mentioned in these presentations and statistics. That is why getting to meet Helen Hamlin, Maria from Riverstone, or the people at the Death Café, was so important to me. It allowed me to put faces and names to the ink and page. What resulted is a 3-D experience, entirely unprecedented. In speaking to them, I felt more connected to what I was doing. I felt a greater need to plunge myself into my projects – to do something that would make a difference in their lives.

The sheer humanity of their experiences deeply humbled me in a way that I can hardly express. Those are times that I loved. I will carry these with me forever.

Aside from these wonderful experiences that can't be replicated, I appreciate the deep regard you have for your interns. Most intern positions entail answering phones, getting coffee, making copies, and maybe the occasional research project.

This summer, I was endlessly delighted by the hands-on experiences I was provided.

It truly hit me at our first steering committee meeting in June 2018. You turned to me and asked, "Brynn, what do you think?" Just then, I realized how special this summer would be. Not only was I making a difference, but also I was able to put my ideas and opinions out there. Suddenly, I was an equal. That experience meant more to me than I can say.

Endlessly grateful, I learned how to navigate a professional environment. I learned something even more valuable – how to be a member of a team.

Before I conclude (because I am endlessly verbose}, I have a few more thank yous and closing remarks.

Let me emphasize again how incredible and truly life altering my experiences have been this summer. I've also been writing a novel over the past few months. I even incorporated some of the experiences I had and the people I've met and the things I've learned. Because I was so touched, I hope others can be too.

Thank you for being you. I could not have asked for a more passionate, engaging, and supportive boss throughout this experience. You constructed the Gray Panthers team and filled it with lovely people who I absolutely loved speaking to. From Rolly to Beverly to Frances to Wendl, and to every other person I met, they are all committed to making a difference. It invigorated me. You created a family that I was happy to be a part of.

In case I haven't said this enough – thank you. Thank you for believing in me.

I will never forget this summer. I hope to make the amount of difference in the community that you have, as I matriculate and beyond.

Thank you again and stay in touch.

Sincerely,
Brynn