During the past summer, I interned with the US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). FAS is primarily a trade agency, but it also has a significant capacity building portfolio in the seven countries covered in the US Embassy office in Nairobi, Kenya where I was assigned.

My internship involved both parts of FAS’s mission: trade and capacity building. I conducted primary research on trade in Kenya and Uganda, authored reports, and met with importers and manufacturers. I also worked with NGO leaders to clarify development program opportunity announcements and visited sites of ongoing development programs. I gathered data and reported on the production and export of Kenyan tea and compiled feedback from participants in FAS-sponsored technical exchange programs. One of my most significant learning experiences from the internship was knowing about the scientific, political, and food security aspects of biotechnology in Kenya.
Kenya from the conferences and presentations I attended.

In my work, I found what I learned in Dr. Mitra’s Agriculture and Development class to be extremely useful, especially for understanding how food security relates to the economy. I found the economic and political aspects of the trade theories taught in Dr. Schwalbenberg’s International Trade class to be very helpful in understanding regulations and price levels. Concepts and nomenclature from the Project Management series were useful in communicating with business people and my experience in the Philippine Project Assessment class was helpful in conducting primary research.

I got an overview of running an investment management firm. With only three full time employees in the firm, I had the chance to get involved with a broad range of responsibilities necessary to keep the business running. I was exposed to various aspects of their investment processes and had the privilege of working with the firm’s founder and CIO, Paul Goldstein.

Through GCC I was exposed to the work involved in managing a portfolio. I primarily contributed to streamlining MS Excel worksheets that organize and analyze data used to generate portfolio returns and calculate portfolio performance. I also assisted in the day-to-day operational needs of the firm such as processing trades and updating portfolio management reports. By processing trades on a daily basis I was able to have an overview of pricing and analysis of bonds.

Being an IPED student was definitely an asset during my internship. Having taken courses like Financial Analysis and Global Financial Markets, I was able to engage with our CIO in insightful conversations regarding the overall economy and debt markets. Knowing the impact of macroeconomic fundamentals, such as interest rate changes, and policies including quantitative easing on the fund’s investments, gave me an edge in making the most out of my summer internship.

This internship has undoubtedly opened doors for me for future employment. I will still be interning with them throughout the fall semester and the experience will allow me to further witness changes in the market. This and knowing how firms react to these changes will certainly be an asset when I apply for a job after IPED.
following my first year in the International Political Economy and Development (IPED) program at Fordham University, I interned with the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) here in New York City.

Established in 2005 by President Bill Clinton, CGI, an initiative of the Clinton Foundation, convenes global leaders to create and implement innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges. CGI Annual Meetings have brought together more than 150 heads of state, 20 Nobel Prize laureates, and hundreds of leading CEOs, heads of foundations and NGOs, major philanthropists, and members of the media. The Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) convenes leaders to drive action through its unique model. Rather than directly implementing projects, CGI facilitates action by helping members connect, collaborate, and make effective and measurable Commitments to Action.

During my summer spent with CGI, I was able to translate a number of skills acquired during my first year in the IPED program into meaningful contributions within the Commitments Department. The extensive training in economic policy and community level economic development in IPED, in addition to service as Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco, provided a solid foundation and tangible familiarity with various forms of “commitments” being carried out in the field.

Additionally, the multi-disciplinary approach IPED takes in regards to its curriculum was mirrored in the approach inherent in the CGI model which brings

I spent the summer working at WaterSHED (Water Sanitation & Hygiene Enterprise Development) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Founded by a grant from USAID, WaterSHED is a Cambodian-based NGO working to improve the extremely low access to appropriate sanitation, hygiene and clean water in the Cambodian countryside. After Cambodia’s civil conflict ended in the early ’90s, many NGOs and development organizations began giving away or heavily subsidizing sanitation and hygiene products such as latrines and water filters.

Though well-intentioned, these efforts have effectively destroyed the Cambodian market for these products and created a culture of dependency on NGOs in the Cambodian countryside. WaterSHED has sought to reverse this trend by stimulating market demand among Cambodian villagers for sanitation products.

WaterSHED has helped in the creation of a market for latrines in the Cambodian countryside through various strategies. These include analysis of the

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barriers to latrine ownership among villagers, use of targeted behavior change communication platform and design of low-cost Do-It-Yourself latrine installation kit. This market-based approach has enabled the rapid uptake of latrine usage across several Cambodian provinces, with over 50,000 latrines being sold in the last two years.

One variable that WaterSHED has identified as being crucial to a village’s success in latrine adoption is the quality of local leadership in that village. This has led WaterSHED to undertake a year-long leadership intervention across several districts with the hope and possibility of scale-up in the future. My role at WaterSHED was in the project design phase of this intervention. I was tasked with planning and facilitating a two-day workshop for WaterSHED staff to roll out the project’s Monitoring & Evaluation method, called Outcome Mapping. I took part in numerous planning meetings, spent time in the field, and met with several government officials in support of the project.

An understanding of the detrimental physical and cognitive consequences of poor sanitation and nutrition, exposure to survey design, familiarity with different M&E mechanisms, and a fundamental understanding of Econometrics, all of which I gained during my first year of study at Fordham, played into my work at WaterSHED.

Because of my time in IPED, I felt like I was able to add value to my projects, and I will be returning to work at WaterSHED full-time after graduation!