

In my own words

Opportunities enhance education

By Taylor Forrest
Staff reporter



There are times in our collegiate career when we are presented with opportunities that rise above the normalcy of classes, tests, papers and labs. Opportunities that can not only further our education, but add experience to our resume by furthering our understanding of the world. If you are not able to carefully spot these unique and favorable contingencies, they often slip by without a mere utterance of regret because you aren't even aware of what you missed.

I recently grabbed onto the chance to travel to Washington D.C. to attend the annual National College Media Conference in which thousands of student journalists met to learn the tricks of the trade from the best in the journalism field. This was not the first time that I had attended the ACP conference, but my third year as a returning attendee. The first conference I attended was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the second being in

Austin, Texas. Looking back on all three conferences at all three locations, I have amazing memories and lessons that I took home with me to share with the Collegian staff or the Moundbuilder Yearbook staff. I can pinpoint my growth as a journalism student to different moments at all three conferences.

At the most recent conference in D.C., I was astounded each and every day by the people I met or listened to. I felt like I needed to become a sponge and soak up all of the information and ideas that were whizzing around me. As a politics junkie, my political whims were sated by listening to the founder of Politico, an online and print news sources that only focuses on politics, talk about the importance of covering politics and how to do so in a revolutionary way in this technological, digital age. But, that was just the beginning. I watched as students, myself included, and advisers sat in awe of Bob Woodward as he talked about how, through his investigative journalism, he took down Richard Nixon's administration. I watched as thousands of students piled in and resorted to sitting on the floor to sit and rapturously listen to Edward Snowden discuss his controversial disclosures about the NSA to journalists and describe the vulnerabilities our country faces in the face of cyber security. These were once in-a-lifetime opportunities that will forever resonate in the back of my inquisitive and journalistic mind.

Not only was the conference advanta-

geous to my college career, but I was also able to visit and immerse myself in the culture that is our nation's capital. Having previously lived in Washington D.C. over the summer, I was able to navigate the city and take full advantage of being back in the place that I loved with such ferocity. We paid tribute at the memorials. We soaked up the beauty at the art galleries. We ate exquisite food and we sat in awe of the structures that make up the District. As I am hopeful to one-day return to D.C. on a permanent basis, I could not have asked for a better location for my last ACP conference.

While not every student would benefit from a journalism conference, it can often be found that at Southwestern, students across all different majors have unique opportunities presented to them in a beneficial manner. It is up to us as aspiring professionals to seize these moments when they are presented to us, and at Southwestern that happens quite often. Due to our small campus, professors and advisers often are looking out for us, scouting out conferences, internships and other beneficial experiences for us to take advantage of. For example, Enactus is always traveling around the country furthering their entrepreneurial skills and making nation-wide connections. In fact, a group recently traveled to Dallas to attend the Enactus USA Fall Leadership Training. And a team from worship outreach will be traveling to Atlanta, Georgia to attend the NEXT conference this week as well.

In the span of three weeks, we have had students, from three different departments, travel thousands of miles and attend three different conferences and there are some I probably don't know about. For as small as Southwestern is, that is astounding.

Thus, I implore you to actively seek out these opportunities because they are so complimentary to your education. Don't stop there though. Come back to campus and share your experience with others so that they can be encouraged to follow suit and explore their career field outside of the classroom.

The Collegian staff and UpdateSC offers a reoccurring column called "In My Own Words" that will serve as an outlet for students across campus to share their unique college experiences.

It can be modeled after this example and students can submit their work to any of the staff emails below. Don't sit idly on your experiences, make them worthwhile and have them heard by your peers.

If you are interested in submitting your own "In My Own Words" column, don't hesitate to contact our staff with any submissions or questions.

Taylor.forrest@sckans.edu

Kylie.stamper@sckans.edu

Hanna.House@sckans.edu

Cortney.Showalter@sckans.edu

Taylor Forrest is a senior majoring in communication. You may email her at taylor.forrest@sckans.edu.

Taylor Forrest/Staff Photographer

