

Ashley Johnson

## Georgetown- National Security and Counterintelligence

My week at Georgetown is one that I hopefully never forget. I was lucky enough to receive a scholarship and partake on this experience with one of my good friends Kathryn. When we first arrived, the campus was so large we were overwhelmed and got caught up in how new everything was to us. We resembled lost tourists trying to find our way to check-in and couldn't help but laugh at how ridiculous we looked. After we found our way, we anxiously waited in line to gather our paperwork and our keys then proceeded to the dorms to meet our roommates. I instantly bonded with my roommate and knew my week was going to be full of new adventures.

I was fortunate to spend the days at Georgetown learning and hearing lectures from superiors that were aligned with occupations involving national security and counter-intelligence. Along with the lectures, we participated in hands on activities. The activities we were involved in were traveling to the Spy Museum and Cryptology Museum. At the Spy Museum, we were able to pretend we were spies and climb through the air ducts. At the Cryptology Museum, we were able to play the kids games and earn prizes with our new friends. We were fortunate enough to have lecturers that were able to share information and their own, unique stories with us. Hearing from all of them will be something I never forget, from learning about all the different positions available to someone my age in the CIA to hearing all the different ways intelligence is used; it was so amazing to experience it all first hand. It was also really inspiring to hear from so many agencies like the CIA, NSA, and DIA. They were the people who do the jobs that we see in movies and never think to be actually real. What they do for our country is amazing; they are protecting us at all cost and most of the time we don't even know it, taking them for granted. After lectures, we would split into groups and have discussions with our institute assistants (IA), which was such an amazing process. All the things I've learn there have drawn me to want a career directed towards national security and counter-intelligence. All the knowledge I gained was incredible and was sad when we had our final lecture. I wish I could've been there longer!

The friendships I built are something I will never forget, and all the free time we had was great to explore M Street and check out the local hubs. We even got to try the famous Georgetown cupcakes, but locals said that "Baked and Wired" was better, so we had to test it out. I was surprised at how well I found similar interests with the people there and how quickly we all become such friends. My week was nothing like I expected it would be, I thought it would just be lectures and field trips, but we actually had lots of free time to bond with the people there and do all sorts of fun activities. My favorite memory was when all my new friends and I were walking down to M street and found the stairs that were used in the movie the Exorcist; all of us were freaking out as we walked down them, laughing at one another. On the last night there was a huge glow-in-the dark dance party thrown that we all went to and it was so great to let loose with all my new friends. It was amazing to make all these memories and I would like to thank the

Naples Council on World affairs for giving me this wonderful opportunity, it was such a valuable learning experience to my future.