

Kathryn Quintero
Barron Collier High School

Summer at Georgetown
National Security and Counterintelligence Institute

As a rising senior, I have a lot of anxiety about the future, particularly about college. There's a constant deluge of concerns and questions that seem to be a never-ending cycle on repeat 24/7. What if I'm not good enough to get in? Where do I even want to go? Do I even know what I want to study? What happens if I absolutely hate the place and the people? Too expensive? Scholarships? Test scores? The list goes on. Before I attended the program at Georgetown, these questions were looming, ominous dark clouds that hung over my head, each seeming larger and more burdened with bleak outcomes than those preceding it. Did I think one week at a school I wasn't even sure about going to would change that? Not at all. Did it? Absolutely.

The only thing I really knew about national security was that it was necessary for the safety of our country and its people; I'd never really looked into it or considered it as a possible career. Actually, prior to this institute, political science was several ranks down from what I was really interested in: journalism. However, learning about it through the various lectures, speakers, and off-campus visits spurred me to reconsider what I wanted to go to school for entirely. Learning about the various agencies, job opportunities concerning this field, and the missions that the national security and counterintelligence organizations have enticed me. And while the days were long, and after the third two hour lecture I was ready to take a nap, I found most, if not all, of the information presented to be intriguing and a definite area of interest.

Probably the second most important factor that has bumped political science (and Georgetown) to the top of my list was the people that I met. On the very first day, a group of about seven of us clicked right off the bat. We didn't all have the same views or interests, but everyone was open-minded and motivated by similar goals. The same was true of everyone else in the program. It was so easy to be thrown into a group of random individuals I had never met before and strike up a conversation, whether it was about the program content or where they were from. Those running the institute (the institute assistants) were also very easy to talk to and were often able to answer any questions regarding the content or the school itself, in fact, it was through them that I (and others) found out the most about the school (things like scholarships, on campus organizations and activities, etc.).

We didn't have very much free time as the days were usually pretty packed, but if we had extended time for lunch or dinner, we'd make an effort to get to M Street to stop by one of the restaurants. M Street was maybe a twenty-minute walk from the school, but the dining experiences were definitely worth a trudge in the heat and humidity. For the days we couldn't make it, we would stop by one of the cafes on campus (very good coffee and acai bowls) or by the dining hall, which was a minute walk from the upperclassmen dorms we were staying in. After a night class (which focused on our capstone project—basically an end of course project that was worked on in groups), we had about two hours before eleven o'clock curfew. During those two hours, we'd hang out in the common rooms, go to the gym, or make quick

Kathryn Quintero
Barron Collier High School

trips to Wisconsin Avenue and M-Street (always in groups). Overall, there was a lot to do in the area and on campus.

For me, the campus, the people, and the area of study concerned were simply ideal and this experience has lessened the anxiety I have concerning college greatly. I now know what it is I wish to study, the kind of college I want to attend, and the setting I wish for it to be located in. Not to mention, it has broadened my awareness of the intelligence community and the views that many have concerning policies implemented and measures taken by both foreign and domestic governments. This experience has been so incredibly influential and informative that I honestly can't imagine where I would be right now regarding the decision-making process not only for college, but ultimately my future. I can't say I still don't have my doubts and worries, but they are no longer a constant thrum, more so a tolerable trickle. This program has given me direction, motivation, special friendships and memories, and I could not be more thankful.

If I could make some quick recommendations: 1) bring clothing suitable for heat and humidity (there aren't many, if any, dressy days), 2) bring your own pillow, at least, if not your own bedding, and a towel (you are really given the bare minimum in terms of dorm accommodation), 3) try to make it to M-Street at least a couple times, 4) ask questions (you have so much information right at your fingertips), 4) bring money for souvenirs or to go and eat (the dining hall is free but it isn't gourmet), 5) obey the rules and regulations they give you (it's only a week, it isn't worth it to get kicked out over a conduct issue), and 6) you only really need a notebook and a pen to take notes, most of the work you will do is in class or does not require additional materials).