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Upton Finds Math Paradise

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As a child, Jeff Primozich ’09 dreamed of being a diplomat. Last summer he took a first step toward that goal.

Primozich honed his knowledge of Canada during an internship at the Canadian Consulate in Seattle, Wash. He worked in the department of political and economic relations, and public affairs, staffing booths at events and promoting good relations between Canada and the United States.

The experience not only boosted his self-confidence but also deepened his understanding of the need for global cooperation.

“I’m better able to comprehend what it means to represent the interests of the United States abroad and to work closely with foreign governments to promote policies that will be beneficial to both countries,” said Primozich, a political science major and music minor. “I have a fundamental belief that global cooperation is necessary for global stability, and to be able to play a role in facilitating that cooperation is very exciting.”

One of Primozich’s most interesting and challenging tasks was organizing elements of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region Summit, which focuses on regional partnerships and cooperation. He helped organize the Clean, Green Border Tour, an environmentally friendly event, for representatives from governments, businesses and universities in the Seattle, Tacoma and Bellingham areas. The tour’s goal was to educate participants about environmental awareness and the missions of the Canadian Consulate.

Although Primozich hopes to use this internship as a launching pad for a career in the Foreign Service, his immediate plans include joining the Peace Corps.

“What better way to gain cultural experiences than through the Peace Corps?” he said. “I’ve been craving an opportunity to live somewhere else in the world and immerse myself in the culture. It would be a gateway for me to accomplish something with my life.”

Primozich credited the recommendation of Dawn Nowacki, professor of political science, as instrumental in helping him secure an internship at the Canadian Consulate last summer. Primozich’s professional goal is to become a diplomat.

Both Nowacki and Primozich recognize that Canada is sometimes overlooked as a foreign country because of its proximity to the United States. In fact, during his interview for the internship, Primozich was asked whether he had ever been abroad, to which he replied “no.” He was then asked if he had ever been to Canada. He answered “yes.”

“Besides reaffirming Primozich’s desire to be a part of the Foreign Service, the internship helped him gain valuable relationships,” Nowacki said.

The professors and students who shared her love of math were enthusiastic about the material.

“It was really nice to collaborate,” Upton said. “Many times during the school year, you work in groups with students who aren’t math majors and you have to explain (difficult concepts). We didn’t have to do that with each other. It was cool to have that kind of equality.”

At Carleton, Upton attended classes and listened to guest speakers who outlined math research projects. Discussions of math and what the students had learned did not end with the classes or speakers. After working on group projects, the women explored how everyone had answered the problem and shared plenty of laughter and fun.

“It’s no surprise that Upton, who is from Corvallis, has an affinity for math. Both of her parents are engineers. I have always had encouragement to be on the science side of things,” said Upton, a double major in math and physics.

“I can tell that she truly loves studying mathematics,” Bricher said. “She has the tools to successfully pursue an advanced degree in mathematics, and this program reinforced that perspective.”