

# BREAKING BLUES

BLUEFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY

FALL 2024



## **Myles Rice**

Visit to the U.S. Capitol

## **Deuce Cooper**

A Season of Possibilities

## **An Impactful Journey**

To the District of Columbia  
Study Abroad/Study Away Program

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Breaking Blues provides practical professional experiences to students enrolled in BSU's Humanities concentration in Strategic Public Relations and Communications.

Submissions of success stories of BSU students and Alumni by BSU students are welcomed but their publication will be determined by the Editorial Board which consists of students enrolled in Strategic Public Relations and Communications.





Anthony Bright (left) and Bluefield State University President Dr. Darrin Martin (right).

# ANTHONY BRIGHT'S CHESS TABLE PROTOTYPE

FOR THE HONORS COLLEGE CHESS INVITATIONAL

by Myles Rice

Anthony Bright, an Honors Scholar from Bland County, Virginia, arrived at BSU with over 60 credits. He shared his enthusiasm for starting a chess club and tournament, an idea initially introduced to him by Dr. Jamkhandi. The centerpiece of his initiative is a unique chess table with a design that reflects his modern and futuristic vision.

The chess table stands out for its innovative construction: a flat-bottomed half-sphere supports a square board, which expands from a smaller base to a larger surface. Surrounding the board is a dedicated area for captured pieces, designed for players to fidget with—a feature inspired by Anthony's observation of common player habits.

The height of the table is thoughtfully calibrated, allowing players to rest their feet comfortably,

likened to the instinct of propping feet up behind a desk.

When asked about custom chess pieces to match the custom table, Anthony mentioned he considered 3D printing pieces, jokingly suggesting Dr. Jamkhandi's face on them—a suggestion that was kindly declined. Ultimately, Anthony decided to use standard pieces to complement his thoughtfully crafted table.

This innovative project demonstrates Anthony's creativity and dedication, blending functionality with a player-focused design to elevate the chess experience for all participants. ■

*To sign up for the Honors College Chess Club, email [abright@live.bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:abright@live.bluefieldstate.edu)*

*Honors College Chess Invitational slated for Fall 2025*

# MYLES RICE

## INTERNSHIP IN SENATOR JOE MANCHIN'S OFFICE

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### First letter from Myles Rice while enjoying an internship in Senator Joe Manchin's Office in Washington, D.C., Fall 2024

Dear Professor Jammy and Writers of Breaking Blues,

I hope this message finds you well! I wanted to share some of the experiences from my internship in Senator Manchin's office, along with some insights I've gained. Attached are a few pictures from my time in D.C., including moments with Senators Manchin and Warnock.

From day one, I realized how unique my position is as the only full-time intern. I work Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM, while my fellow interns, Lauren and Matt, are part-time. My journey started with the typical paperwork, setting up my

government email, and receiving my Senate ID badge—definitely a surreal moment! I was also invited to the Energy and Natural Resources meeting by Senator Manchin, which was a great opportunity to learn firsthand from a leader in his field.

Throughout my internship, I've had the privilege of giving Capitol tours, exploring restricted parts of the Senate buildings, and working on projects related to affordable housing. I've been fortunate to attend several important hearings, including those with the Finance and Veterans Affairs Committees, where I met influential figures like Senator Raphael



West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin and Bluefield State University Entrepreneur Major, Myles Rice.





U.S. Senator Tim Scott of North Carolina and Myles Rice.

Warnock, an HBCU grad and AΦA brother, which was an inspiring moment for me.

What's been truly eye-opening is not just the political process but the network-building opportunities. I've reached out to the three Black Senators—Tim Scott, Cory Booker, and Raphael Warnock—aiming to learn from their experiences and get their perspective on the work they're doing. This is an invaluable part of the journey that I would encourage every student to seek in internships like this.

I've also had some more laid-back moments, like enjoying meals at We The Pizza or Union Station during my breaks and participating in small but meaningful tasks like delivering birthday cards for Senators. On the days where there are no major tasks, I catch up on homework and try to further explore the resources available to me, like the Senate Library.

The lessons I've learned here are not only about politics but about patience, initiative, and relationship-building. Opportunities like these have allowed me to engage with powerful figures

and explore behind-the-scenes operations that are crucial to the country's workings. For anyone considering a similar path, I highly recommend seeking out an internship in Washington, D.C. The experience goes far beyond what can be taught in a classroom.

My goal to meet all three black senators has yet to be realized. I still need to meet Cory Booker! But as of this writing I have plans to meet him, and also plans to meet Senator Tuberville R-AL who was a college football coach (Auburn) for a long time!

Thank you for this platform to share my story, and I hope it inspires others to look for similar opportunities!

Best regards,  
Myles Rice  
Entrepreneurship Major | Omega Psi Phi |  
Bluefield State University ■

# DEUCE COOPER

## A SEASON OF POSSIBILITIES

by Imani Stokes

Deuce Cooper, a 6'5 sophomore from Detroit, Michigan, is no one to be toyed with. I got the chance to interview Deuce and get insight on this upcoming season and how the past season affected him and his team.

Deuce wears #4 for Bluefield State University because "I started playing in the fourth grade," says Deuce.

Deuce was a key player in the CIAA tournament this past winter (2023) with 10 points, 2 steals, but unfortunately our superstar fouled out in the 3rd quarter and was not able to finish the game.

But Ja'Mere Redus, a 6'1 guard, secured B-State's victory with a game-winning buzzer beater, ending the game with a score of 67- 66.



Deuce Cooper, a 6'5 sophomore from Detroit, Michigan, is nothing to toy with. I got the chance to interview Deuce and get insight on this upcoming season and how the past season is affecting him and his teammates.

- Imani Stokes

Deuce ended his freshman season with 195 points, 24 steals, and 9 blocks. Deuce also won "King of the Kennel" at the 2023 Howler awards. "Winning King of the Kennel was big for me, I was recognized for my dedication and talent and that felt good," says Deuce.

Being a sophomore, Deuce is one of the youngest on the court but that doesn't reflect his overall ardor, strength and athleticism. Deuce says that being a young starter doesn't make him feel pressured but actually makes him perform better and he takes pride in assuming that burden. One of the many returnees this year, Deuce has goals for himself and his teammates.

Lack of discipline and the inability to win games are

among the biggest challenges the men's basketball team faced last season. "Moving as a unit and being cohesive is something we are striving for," says Deuce.

A personal goal for Deuce is to be a leader, be efficient, and nurture his game. Team relations and culture are huge factors in team performance. "We're very gritty," says Deuce, "we do things that other teams won't, and that's what will win games for us."

Team chemistry is being worked on and off the court to build stronger relationships. "Off the court we're like brothers, they're the funniest people I know, and this strong bond translates to the court and how we play and learn our game together," says Deuce.

Deuce is excited about the competition in the CIAA. The 2024-2025 Men's Basketball season kicked off November 8th, 2024 at Wheeling University in Wheeling, West Virginia. It has been an exciting start to the season for B-State Men's Basketball. Go Big Blues! ■



# FALL 2024

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



# GLOBAL UGRAD TRIS NGUYEN AT BSU

by Jacob Lawless

Trang (“Tris”) Nguyen Ha Thao is a student at Bluefield State visiting from Vietnam. She is at BSU through the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (Global UGRAD), which, according to [vn.usembassy.gov](http://vn.usembassy.gov), “...provides a diverse group of emerging student leaders with a scholarship for one semester of non-degree academic study at a U.S. college or university.”

The aim of Global UGRAD is to “recruit participants from underrepresented backgrounds who have not had other opportunities to study in the United States.”

- Jacob Lawless

*Following are her responses about her travels abroad, her experience in the US thus far, and how these compare with life in Vietnam.*

## **How would you compare life in the States with life in Vietnam?**

It is drastically different in every way. The most shocking change is food. I have been accustomed to Vietnamese food and its variety as well as affordability. Since coming here, I have been frantically scrambling for Vietnamese food in every city I travel to. That’s a good thing about the States; there’s cuisine from everywhere. I can enjoy my country’s food here as well as the food from other countries. I’m still thinking about the Turkish Pierogi I had.

Transportation: The US is the nation of cars and I don’t have a car; depending on the goodwill of friends and bus schedules has been miserable. Still, I have been able to travel almost every weekend and have chill weekdays at BSU. It’s such a difference to

the hectic schedule I normally have in Vietnam, like an escape from reality.

## **What differences, if any, do you notice in the values and temperaments of the people in these countries? Do you think Americans and Vietnamese are more similar than they are different?**

Honestly, I was pretty shocked to see that Americans are not how I thought they were based on my assumptions gleaned from the internet. They are much nicer than I thought. Starting with the touchdown from the airport, everyone was offering to help me in any way possible, by asking “How are you doing?” I do feel very welcomed here. In part, I do feel like it’s because Americans perceive that I speak the language well.

## **How do you feel that your travels, not just to the States, but to all the places you have been, have shaped your outlook on others, on life, and on the world?**

I feel smaller and bigger in this world at the same time. I see more and I understand there’s so much more out there, but the fact that I’ve been here, on my own effort? It’s motivating.

## **What is your favorite sight that you have seen in the States so far? Are there any you hope to see?**

A forest full of orange leaves, a city full of skyscrapers; a juxtaposition, but both beautiful and both part of how I view the States. I hope to see snow. Please God, let there be snow, because I have not seen snow, like, ever before in my life.

[Note: On December 3, Tris saw snowflakes gently floating to the ground for the first time in her life!]

## **What are some things from Vietnam (be it art, food, philosophy, anything) that you think more people, particularly people in the States, should be aware of?**

I believe Vietnamese food is among the most



popular cuisines in cities I've travelled to, and I'm glad for that. But it should be known more here in West Virginia. Maybe not within the time I'm here, but I just hope that there could be more of our cuisine here.

*her time in the US serve to demonstrate the importance of doing one's best to understand different cultures, as it not only gives one new and interesting experiences, but makes one a more compassionate, understanding, and intelligent human being.] ■*

*[Jacob Lawless: Talking with Tris has afforded me the opportunity to look into a background and a perspective very different from my own. It is heartening that the US, despite its challenges, has met her with kindness and that, when she returns to Vietnam, she will be able to speak well of her experience in West Virginia. Tris' reflections on*





Alabama Senator Tommy Tuberville (left) and Bluefield State University Entrepreneur Major Myles Rice (right).

# MYLES RICE

## INTERNSHIP IN THE SENATOR JOE MANCHIN'S OFFICE

Second letter from Myles Rice while enjoying an internship in Senator Joe Manchin's Office in Washington, D.C., Fall 2024

Dear Professor Jammy and Breaking Blues Writers, I wanted to give you all an update on what's been happening the past couple of weeks during my internship in Senator Manchin's office. It's been a bit quieter around here since the Senate has been in recess or out of session, but I've still been keeping busy by assisting various staffers with legislative tasks and research. The downtime has given me a chance to dive deeper into some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into policymaking.

I had the opportunity to meet Senator Cory Booker, and he was incredibly nice! We even snapped a cool

selfie together, which was a highlight for me. I also met Senator Tommy Tuberville, and we ended up talking football and exploring his office. It was a fun experience connecting with him through sports.

Another memorable moment was getting a professional headshot taken by Senator Manchin's special assistant, just for fun! I've been working on making connections and exploring D.C. in my free time, which has been a rewarding part of this experience.

I also gave a Capitol tour to Jim Strawn, an entrepreneur from West Virginia who works with





U.S. Senator Cory Booker with interns, and Myles Rice.

Senator Manchin back home. It was great meeting someone from WV who's been successful in both business and politics. Additionally, we had an event here in the Capitol called WV United, when WVU and Marshall alumni and staff gathered. I met both universities' presidents, their mascots, and of course, my boss Senator Manchin and Senator Capito. The event was full of energy and plenty of free goodies, food, and drinks.

Overall, things are going well here, and I'm continuing to learn and grow in this role. I appreciate the support and platform Breaking Blues gives me to share these experiences with everyone.

Thanks again and talk soon!

Myles Rice  
Entrepreneurship Major | Omega Psi Phi  
Bluefield State University ■



Myles Rice with Senator Shelley Moore Capito during the WV United event at the US Capitol.



Myles Rice with WVU Mountaineers' mascot.

# XAVIAR JARMON'S

## INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE: GROWTH AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

### **Introduction to Xavier Jarmon**

Xavier Jarmon, a senior at Bluefield State University, is currently pursuing a degree in humanities with a concentration in strategic public relations and communications. His journey through academia and extracurricular activities reflects his deep commitment to this field of study. Alongside his academic responsibilities, Xavier is also a football player, proudly representing his university on the field. His talent for communication, especially in writing and public speaking, has positioned him well for a career in public relations. As a scholarship recipient, he continues to excel both in academics and sports while preparing to enter the professional world.

### **Mentorship Under Commanding Officer Patrick Gordon**

Xavier had the privilege of spending this past summer under the guidance of Commanding Officer Patrick Gordon. His time with Mr. Gordon was marked by invaluable learning opportunities in the field of public relations (PR). From crafting formal messages to building positive dialogue, Xavier gained skills that will serve him well into the future. Moreover, he honed his ability to feel comfortable in front of a camera—a vital skill for a PR professional. Xavier expressed immense gratitude for everything Mr. Gordon taught him, stating that he feels confident stepping into the world of public relations equipped with significant knowledge and experience.

### **A Memorable Project: Craig Day Marvin's Personality Feature**

During his internship, Xavier was tasked with a notable project: crafting a personality feature article on Craig Day Marvin, a member of the Naval Base

and a professional lacrosse player. Under Gordon's supervision, Xavier conducted an interview with Marvin, carefully noting his responses and using them to write a piece that highlighted the athlete's successes. Published in the Naval Base's newsletter, Xavier's article evidenced his ability to engage with subjects to write compelling stories for public consumption.

### **Gaining Confidence in Front of the Camera**

Xavier's internship experience wasn't limited to writing. He was also given an opportunity to comment on a football game between Old Army and Navy, which expanded his skills in sports broadcasting. This experience allowed him to feel more comfortable and capable in front of the camera, further preparing him for the multifaceted demands of public relations.

### **Mastering the Teleprompter**

Another significant aspect of Xavier's internship was his training in using a teleprompter. He learned how to read scripts confidently while appearing natural and conversational on camera. This skill is crucial for anyone in media or public relations, as it demonstrates confidence, knowledge, and poise. Xavier's ability to engage with the teleprompter further solidified his potential as a future PR professional.

### **A Grateful Farewell and Future Aspirations**

As the summer internship came to an end, Xavier reflected on his journey with gratitude. He considered the experience both a blessing and a significant step toward his future career. Xavier extended thanks to Ms. Jennifer Brown, who hosted the program, for providing an incredible internship opportunity. He also expressed his appreciation for Patrick Gordon's mentorship and guidance. With a





Xavier Jarmon (middle) and Jennifer Brown (right).

clear path ahead, Xavier is excited to apply the skills and lessons he has learned as he embarks on his future endeavors in public relations.

Xavier Jarmon's summer internship was filled with hands-on experiences, from writing and media engagements to mentorship and personal growth.

As he looks forward to a promising career, his time with Mr. Gordon and the skills he's gained will surely pave the way for his success in public relations. ■

BREAKING BLUES

# AN IMPACTFUL JOURNEY TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

by Paul Webb  
Study Abroad/Study Away Program



Bluefield State University students and instructor chaperones at the US Capitol in Washington D.C.



It had been a long time since I visited the District. I lived in the Greater DC Metro Area a couple of decades ago, and I have only visited the area a couple of times since. My time in the area was vocational, and between the fast-paced life in the bustling metropolitan area and considerably difficult-to-navigate transportation infrastructure (at the time), it was a rare occasion to make it into the heart of the city. It was an even rarer occasion when I could spend considerable time in the District due to work and other obligations in Northern Virginia.

When I discovered the opportunity to visit DC as part of the “Study Away/Study Abroad Program,” I was ecstatic to revisit a place I held in such high regard, with various cultural influences and confluences. I wondered how much the area had changed over the years and how the social dynamics of the city had changed as people had changed. I looked forward to not only revisiting some of the same places with a fresh perspective but also exploring new places and meeting new people along the way.

A handful of students (including myself) and instructor chaperones met early on a spring morning outside the Bluefield campus’s maintenance building. There were some familiar faces, including several faculty members, as well as several students I had seen regularly on campus and several students I had not met or recognized up to this point. Over the course of the trip, we would all become acquainted with each other and share a unique experience.

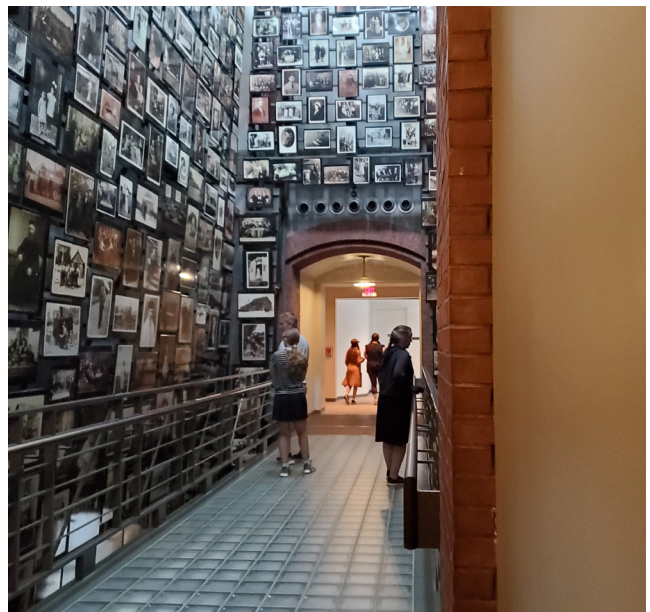
The van ride to DC seemed considerably longer than I remembered, yet I inferred that a great degree of the reasoning for this derived from the anticipation of reaching the destination. The trip itself was somewhat uneventful, and we arrived at our hotel late afternoon.

Most of our planned activities were scheduled for the upcoming week, so we would have the rest of the weekend to explore the city, take in the sights, and get to know each other a little bit.

We got settled in around dinner time and several of us found a local Thai restaurant where I enjoyed some very tasty Pad Thai. The atmosphere was enjoyable; as the weather cooperated well enough to eat outside, we ate and contemplated where we would explore the upcoming day.

On Sunday, we started our day with coffee and breakfast, enjoying various baked goods at a bakery nearly adjacent to the hotel. This would become the “meeting spot” to start (most of) the days there. Once

we got our fill, we headed out into the city. Many of us, including myself, went down to the Holocaust Museum. After spending some time reflecting there, we grabbed some fare from a local street vendor and headed to the National Mall. We stopped by the World War II Memorial, as well as the Vietnam War Memorial. Additionally, we stopped by the “original Smithsonian” building, a castle-like structure. While it was closed for renovations, we enjoyed the garden next to it to take a break from the sun and warmer weather of the city. We visited the Washington and Lincoln Monuments and made it by the Whitehouse as it was getting dark. We stopped by a local pizzeria on the way back and reflected on this whirlwind of sites in such a short time.



(pictured top and center)  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
in Washington, D.C.





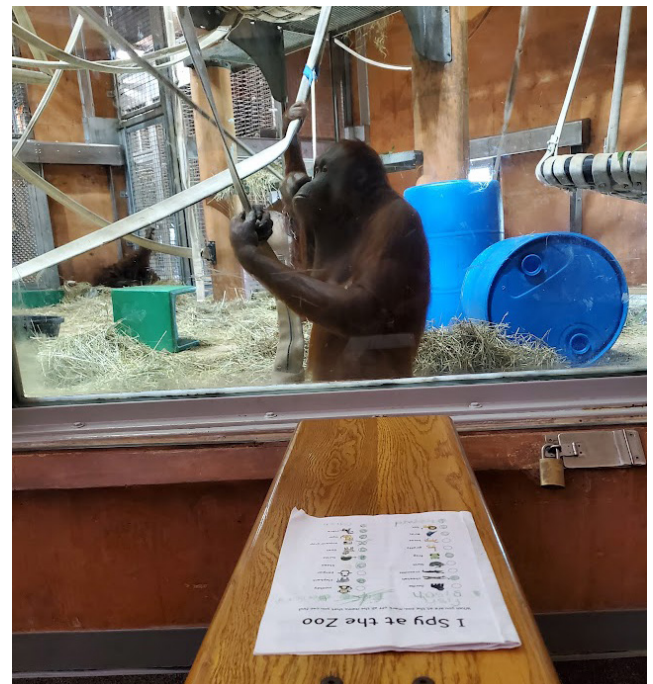
World War II Memorial, Washington D.C.



The Three Service Men Statue  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.



The Smithsonian Castle, located at  
1000 Jefferson Dr SW, Washington D.C.



(pictured top and bottom)  
The National Zoo, Washington D.C.

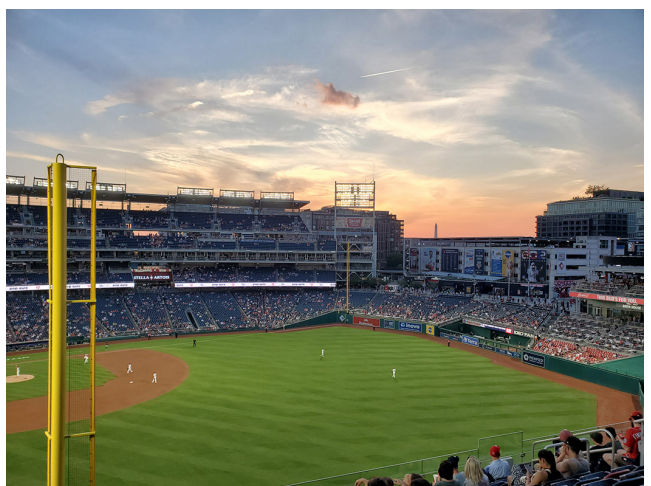
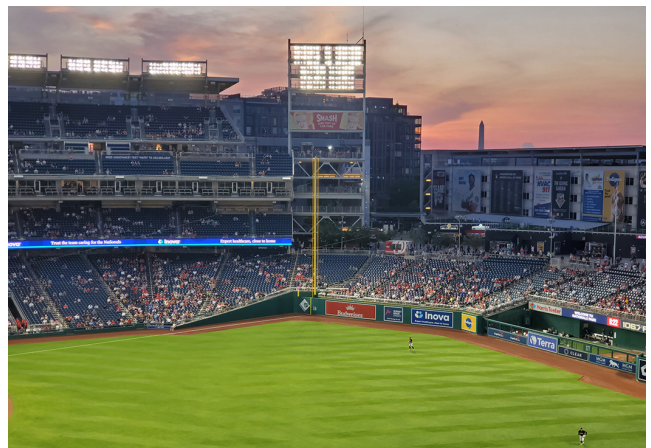




The White House, Washington D.C.



The Abraham Lincoln Memorial



(pictured top and bottom)  
Nationals Park Baseball Stadium, Washington D.C.

The next day, after grabbing some brioche bread next door to the hotel, we headed over to the National Zoo. We saw species from all over the globe, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish. The meerkats were very entertaining and clever, and I enjoyed their interaction. Also, there was an interesting ape who had been taught to use lexicon symbols, which I found interesting. We spent a significant portion of the day at the zoo and worked up a good appetite, at least I did. Several of us were going to catch an evening baseball game across town, and on the way, we found an amazing Lebanese restaurant. I ordered a sampler dish, and I probably would have ordered more if I had more time. We made it to the baseball game just in time and enjoyed a night game watching the Nationals.

On Tuesday, we got a bit later start, and while some folks made it to the bakery for breakfast, others forewent it. Once everyone was together, we went back down toward the National Mall and visited the Smithsonian Art Museum. There, I saw original paintings from famous and lesser-known artists from all over the world. I checked out the modern art museum for a while and met with the main group. I grabbed something quick to eat and went on a van ride through “embassy row,” an area of DC where most of the embassies are located. Some of them were large, like the Canadian Embassy, while others were smaller, often houses sometimes shared between more than one country.

On Wednesday, we traveled over to Georgetown University for a tour and presentation of the campus. Georgetown has a well-known and respected International Studies program, and I asked questions regarding their program and background. We checked out the multiple buildings on campus, and I was impressed by the 19th-century architecture. After the tour, a few of us walked over to the adjacent shops and checked out the colorful storefronts of Georgetown, and walked down to the historical ferry towpath that was used during the 18th and 19th centuries. After we were down there, we took a ride over into Northern Virginia to visit a Vietnamese shopping complex called Eden Center. I ate some tasty seasoned chicken, veggies, and rice at one of the restaurants there. Afterward, we browsed some of the shops in the center, which contained multiple types of products. Before leaving, we visited a “Vietnamese supermarket” where any type of Vietnamese food was sold there.

On Thursday, we went to the State Department,

where we were given a tour and information regarding the Department. Types of jobs, including diplomat, were discussed and explained, and the connection was made between students of international study being better equipped for State Department work. I was interested to see what types of jobs were with the State Department and the scope of work that diplomats as well as support staff supplies. After leaving, we visited Senator Manchin’s office in DC. We were greeted warmly, and while the Senator was off on business, his staffers provided us with a tour of the Capitol building. I had never been inside of it before and was impressed by the size of everything. I finished off the day by trying an Ethiopian restaurant I had missed out on earlier in the trip. I was not disappointed. The pancake-like bread and the seasonings were novel to my pallet, and I greatly enjoyed them. My hosts were gracious, and the atmosphere was comfortable and inviting.

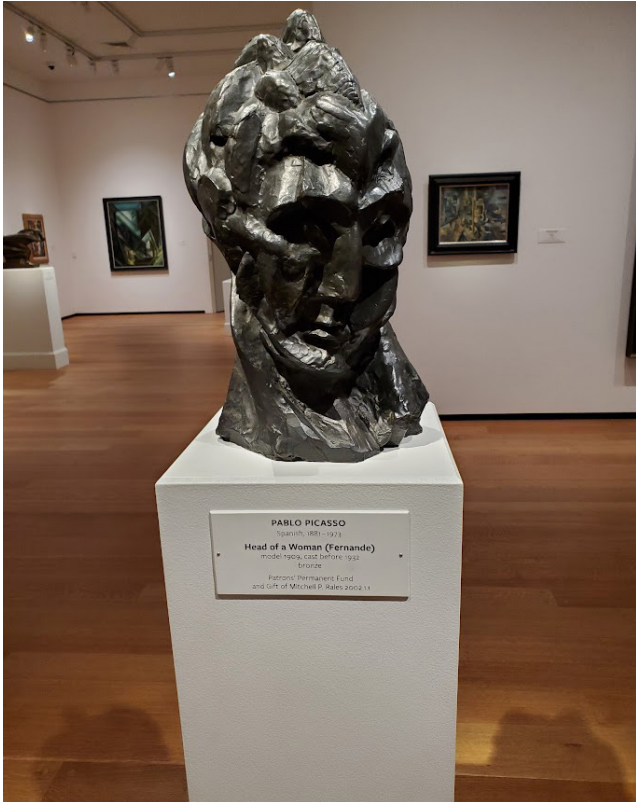


Neptune Fountain at the Jefferson Building



Eisenhower Executive Building, Washington D.C.





Smithsonian Museum of Art, featuring art of Pablo Picasso



Healy Hall at Georgetown University, Washington D.C.





The Old Senate Chamber used by the Senate 1810-1860, US Capitol



Statue of Chief Great Bear of Nebraska US Capitol, Washington D.C.



US Capitol, Washington D.C.





US Capitol, Washington D.C.



Paul Webb at the US Capitol

Like all good things, this trip had to eventually come to an end. On Friday, we prepared to leave out. We stopped one last time at the bakery, Bread Furst, and I got an amazing bagel and coffee. I thought about what a great time I had there, the events I experienced, and the time I got to spend with faculty and other students. Although I wished it had lasted longer, I am very grateful for the experience. ■

*The Study Away in Washington, D.C. was funded by the US Department of Education grant awarded to BSU to **Strengthen Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Languages.***

by Tris Nguyen

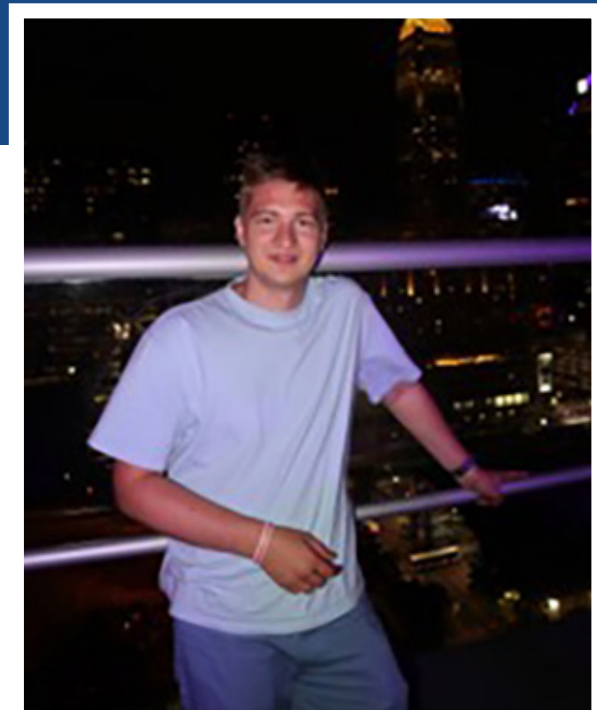
# THE AMERICAN DREAM

Not many know the American Dream quite like international exchange students at Bluefield State University.

Half the earth away, five recipients of the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program from all over the world united in this “country-road” state for just one semester.

What’s the appeal?

Global UGRAD, a highly competitive, fully funded scholarship by the U.S Government with 1% selection rate globally brought Alherd Katsian, a senior, to the mountainous landscape of Bluefield State. Born in Belarus, one might be envious of his many educational pursuits from Ukraine, Germany, Cyprus and now the U.S all for undergraduate studies. Yet behind it is a different story. “In 2021 when I left Belarus, I didn’t know then I would leave forever. Then the war broke out” he recollected. “Unless the border reopens, everywhere in the world is open for me except Belarus and Russia”. Incredibly uncertain and as one should be in his shoes, he seems surprisingly optimistic of not only living in many countries, but on his own without family support. Behind the assumed luck was hard work and academic excellence that acquired him scholarships for everywhere he went. Questioned why he has such perseverance, he pulled up a Russian quote as he giggles that could seem somewhat corny, but perfectly encapsulates his way through life: “Samurai have no goal, only the path.” In this way, he was the perfect candidate for Global UGRAD. The program recruits participants from under-represented backgrounds who have not had other opportunities to study in the United States to experience higher education, gain critical professional skills, but most crucially to promote



Alherd Katsian

the mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries.

Only on the day of departure did Alherd believe he was going to the U.S -- a far-fetched dream for most out there. While he confessed not knowing Bluefield State prior to the trip, despite the modest setting it still presents itself -- to quote Alherd -- “an important cultural experience that enables him to see the way American people live”. And he found beauty in this Wild, Wonderful West Virginia. His day is closely involved with nature, being an avid runner, sometimes with fellow UGRADers (how





From left to right: Ben, Jacob and Caleb from Bluefield State University, Global UGRADS: Alherd from Belarus, Tris Nguyen from Vietnam, Umit from Kazakhstan, Achraf from Morocco

we like to call UGRAD recipients), ending the night with playing guitar or going to student activities, and hanging out with friends from America. “They are nice, friendly students that simply liked to hang out and have fun. Ben, the student Resident Assistant, went out of his way to help me numerous times and was an unprecedentedly great friend despite knowing we would leave in a few months.”

Alherd was also able to experience what he could not academically despite many countries he’s been in. About a criminal justice course, he says: “In class we were investigating crime scenes, having gun shooting simulations and lectures from real policemen and detectives. This is one of those courses that is relevant and potentially life-changing.”

“The U.S., to many outsiders is, let’s be real, metropolitan cities with big skyscrapers (aka New York), land of the dreams and opportunities. You have heard it too often, as have UGRADers and their original expectation of this land. Yet after nearly 2 months here, Alherd pondered and shared his renewed view on the American Dream: “U.S. means to find a friend with a car just because it’s not possible to walk. U.S means working out after eating

unlimited food from cafeteria \*laughs\*. U.S means anyone casually striking up conversations, as if they know you already. Never fails to surprise me. You go anywhere and there’s people, foods from all places in the world. The same way the U.S. can be everything, we can be anyone in the U.S.”

Since 2008, the United States Government has provided this opportunity to over 2,500 Global UGRAD students. This semester, over 140 recipients are scattered across various U.S host universities, with all expenses covered, from fees to plane tickets, tuition, housing and monthly stipends. Bluefield State University is trusted by the Global UGRAD sponsors to have hosted students from all around the world for two consecutive years now and counting.

Keep an eye out for our Global UGRADERS in Spring 2025! ■

*Tris is a journalism student, presenter of national television and a writer for national newspapers in Vietnam.*

# CANADA STUDY ABROAD

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by Curtis Walsh



Bluefield State University Study Abroad Program featuring students in Ottawa, Canada

When Dr. Jamkhandi first started talking about Canada, I looked forward to hearing what was being prepared for the students. When Dr. Jamkhandi asked me if I wanted to go, I had already made up my mind but I needed a passport, which he made possible.

Over the next semester, the plans made excited me even more. The trip would be to Ottawa, Canada. I did not know much about Canada, other than that Ottawa is the capital of Canada. The stereotypes of happy-go-lucky people that constantly eat maple syrup seemed a bit too much like an exaggerated fantasy. Learning about Canada changed how I think about the world and piqued my desire to travel more.

First, all the preparation. I restarted my Duolingo French lessons (and learned much slower than I hoped to). I prepared a list of things I needed to take

and tried to set aside money for the trip. Finally, I went to the meetings and signed the papers saying I knew what to do and how to do it. I was finally ready to go.

I forgot to pack. It was late Saturday night, April 27 and I finally started packing. I packed until 1 in the morning, slept for a couple of hours, and hoped that I could sleep on the plane. When I arrived at Bluefield State to ride to the airport, everyone seemed to have a similar story. We were all excited.

The next week was a wild ride through Ottawa. Our guides, Drs. James Natsis and Clark Egnor met us at the airport after we cleared customs and we were officially in Canada! It was fairly late in the day, so we went to Rideau Street, a major, downtown street, ate an Indian restaurant, checked into our hotel rooms, and went to sleep.



The next morning, we all went to the mall near our hotel and ate breakfast. This became our daily norm, and we found ourselves at that food court – the Tim Hortons and other restaurants – every day. From there, our group would either break into smaller groups and explore, or we would engage in a planned activity for the day.

On the first day, we took a tour of the University of Ottawa. We walked through some buildings, looked at the sculptures inside and beside the buildings, and just admired the campus. I truly enjoyed seeing the campus, since I had not toured many university campuses. The most interesting thing I saw was the pro-Palestine protest that was taking place in one of the parks. The organizers were friendly and invited us to join; however, we continued walking on. Not many protests happen in the area surrounding BSU, so it was cool to see one happening.

The next morning, we toured the primarily French-speaking college, La Cite. This campus was much quieter than the University of Ottawa. All the people I talked to were friendly and I enjoyed the ride on the bus that we took to the college. That afternoon was what I was really looking forward to – going to the National Art Gallery of Canada. I hadn't looked up what exhibits the gallery was currently showing, but I went in, split off from the group and wandered through the exhibits. I occasionally asked the workers what their favorite displayed piece was and found a lot of thought-provoking pieces as a result.

I started with the indigenous art exhibit, and it didn't get any less interesting from there. I have a soft spot for impressionist art, so the Monet and Van Gogh pieces spoke to me the most. But I also made sure to look at the Canadian impressionists and found the works of A.Y. Jackson, Maurice Cullen, and Franz Johnston to be particularly striking.

After the museum tour, our group went directly across the street and walked through the Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica. This was not the first cathedral that I have been in, but every cathedral awes me because of the vastness of the architecture.

The next day was the bike tour through Ottawa. While I know how to bike, somehow that day I lost all my normal capabilities. I crashed into things a few more times than I would care to admit (Sorry, Dr. Bennett). Nevertheless, the views that we found in the city were impeccable and I really enjoyed the

experience of using bike lanes (which are not found in southern West Virginia yet).

The next day we visited the Museum of Natural History. After walking through the temporary exhibition, the group I was with decided to start at the very beginning of Canadian history. The first things I saw were Clovis man arrowheads and spear points from the Blackwater Draw. This shocked me as I grew up in the town right next to that place, Clovis NM. Of course, I had seen similar displays, but it reminded me of my childhood. Nothing else stood out to me in the museum quite like that display. I was awed, however, at the totem poles on display. I did not get to walk next to them, but rather got a view from above and was still awed at their size.

The next day, we toured the Canadian House of Commons Parliament. A fact that stood out to me was that the Parliamentary buildings were currently temporary, and a permanent structure was being built. The chambers used to be outside, and a temporary roof was put over the building. I did not take many pictures there, but the paintings of each prime minister really stood out to me as well.

That afternoon, a couple of us decided to go to Chinatown. So, we left, took the metro, and then the bus, and found our way to Chinatown. After peeking through a couple of shops, we found a place to eat and left for the hotel.

I really liked the downtime that we had on this trip. At first, I had thought that the trip would be very group focused, but I really liked how we were able to settle into smaller groups and explore and point out things the other people should see.

I walked past the United States Embassy on one of these exploration trips. I did more than my fair share of shopping, and brought home more souvenirs, and almost broke my budget in doing so. But, since the trip, I have not stopped thinking about going back or traveling elsewhere. Learning about Canada changed how I think about the world and it piqued my desire to travel more. My thanks goes to all that were involved in this trip. ■

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**Strengthen Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Languages**

Wednesday

16 April

4:00 - 7:00 PM

2025

# Agora



A Celebration of  
Creative Expression

An evening of music,  
original poetry readings,  
and a fashion show

Light refreshments will be  
served between 4:00 to 4:30 pm



Othello Harris-Jefferson  
Student Center

Bluefield State University  
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