

My CGS Story

by Ben Meck (Class of 2015)



My name is Ben Meck, from Dillsburg, Pennsylvania. I am a senior in the College of Information Science and Technology and I am pursuing a degree in Security and Risk Analysis. During this semester (Spring 2015), the Center had new interns, new projects, and new goals. Along with my partners, we set out to try innovative things and look at changing ourselves to make the Center more marketable. In review of this year as a whole, I have been very busy and I have gained experience in both personal and professional development.

First and foremost, my time at the Center was largely influenced by the people that I work with. Obviously there is my supervisor, Sarah Lyall-Combs. She is a very kind lady who understood that I was very busy but always gave me manageable projects. She was always very patient with me and never minded giving me a helping hand. The interns that I worked with were Megan Romania, Bridget Greco, Leah Bader, and Alanna Kaiser. I worked with Megan during the Fall 2014 semester. Megan has a great work ethic and I was happy to work with someone like her. During the spring semester, Bridget took over the social media aspects of the internship (for which I was very grateful) while Leah and Alanna assisted me with all the activities that came along with the internship role.

During the fall, I worked on a Middle East teaching asset website, organized a lecture with Professor Shemanski, managed the Facebook page, wrote blogs, and contributed articles to a monthly newsletter. The Middle East teaching webpage took some time to develop. Together with the advising graduate student Merve, we put together a large number of links and websites that could be helpful. My role was to organize the page, decide what the categories should be, and provide general website links in specific and descriptive ways. I also needed to make sure that all of the websites were age appropriate and that the children didn't read or see anything that could disturb them. We also researched websites that provided in-depth information on areas of extremism.

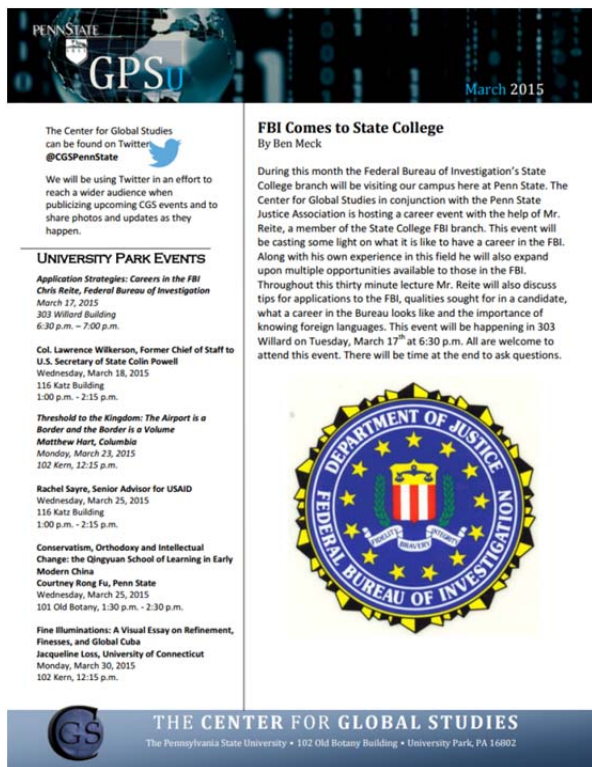
While I was working on the Middle East webpage project, I was also organizing a lecture titled *Managing and Exploiting Change* by Professor Shemanski. During the fall semester, each of the interns at the Center was tasked to come up with an event that would be relevant to their fields of study. Given my background with IST and also my role as Professor Shemanski's intern, I could not think of a better presenter than Professor Shemanski. I discussed the topic with the professor and he agreed to give a presentation. The talk was based around advances in

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technology and how it was changing the world and also how to forecast the course of future events. He also highlighted his time in the State Department and his proficiency with languages and the importance of language expertise. I also managed the logistics by reserving a space for the event and setting out refreshments for the guests. The event was a huge success with every seat in the classroom filled!

At this time, I was also managing the Center for Global Studies Facebook page. This was a significant challenge for me personally because I do not go onto Facebook very often and this assignment needed constant attention. I was tasked to post about events days in advance as well as on the day they were occurring. I also was to post relevant information to the page to keep it current with world events. All of this was in order to attract more people to our page and eventually to our events. Each intern at CGS was also tasked to keep a blog. The blog was to be updated once a month in order to capture timely thoughts about the internship. As time went on, I found not only did this help with my writing style, it was also “freeing” since it allowed me to say almost anything I wanted. As long as the blog was relevant to what was happening at the Center, management was relatively easy-going on what was said.

The interns were also required to collaborate to create a monthly newsletter. The newsletter highlights recent achievements and activities the Center had worked on during that month. This newsletter is sent out to everyone on the Center’s listserv. Anyone following the Center would see the newsletter, so we had to be very professional in our wording and writing style. We also had to style the newsletter to make it pleasing to the eye as well as find relevant images to place throughout it.



Left: Front page of the March 2015 newsletter that featured the FBI event that I coordinated.

In the spring, I had similar tasks to the fall, as well as new ones. I was now responsible for organizing the new interns as well as taking on more difficult projects. I was still required to do the blog and the newsletter, but now I also had to organize a talk with the FBI, attend and help with the World Stories Alive! program at the Schlow library, perform website analytics on our website, and conduct multiple recorded interviews with guest lecturers in the field of international affairs. I was designated as the head intern since I had already been an intern the previous semester and had a grasp of what

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was happening. This responsibility was nothing new to me since I had leadership duties in high school as well. For this position, I just had to help the new interns adjust and learn the tools that we used and make sure that we had people at our events. The tricky part was working around everyone's school schedules and making sure no one person had to do more than their fair share of work.

Later in the semester, I coordinated to have associates of the FBI come give a presentation about careers with the Bureau. The FBI talk was not challenging for me and gave our Center a large increase to our listserv. I worked with Criminology Club and the FBI office in State College and together we picked a large classroom in the Willard building. At the event, the officers discussed their backgrounds and what it was like to work for the FBI. They also emphasized the importance of language skills. This was a successful event for the Center because the attendance was large and gave us great publicity.

Throughout this spring semester, I have also been at the Schlow library almost every Saturday morning working with the CGS partner program, World Stories Alive!. In this series of events, we have graduate students come and read stories to children in a different language. Each session is finished with a cultural song in a different language and then a craft to give the children a broad overview of other languages and hopefully intrigue them. Each intern had three presenters to work with. Prior to the event, we would work with the presenter and have them explain to us what they were going to do and then we would create flyers for the children to follow along with. I was also assigned with driving to the craft store and collecting supplies for the events. The people at the Michael's on Atherton Street have gotten to know me very well!

One of my most significant contributions to the Center came later in the semester when I worked with Bridget, our social media intern, to review Facebook and website analytics to inform Sarah on traffic levels. My role was to write a narrative on the graphs and charts that Bridget produced. The results of this project resulted in changes in the approach to social media and promoting the Center in ways to reach larger audiences.

The most difficult and significant accomplishment during my time at the Center for Global Studies was to conduct video recorded interviews with professionals in the field of global studies who were visiting the University to give lectures. I found this difficult for multiple reasons: I don't like to be on camera; I don't like to be the center of attention; and I tend to speak very quickly when nervous. The interviews actually went very well due to the fact that in each case I researched the guests, attended their lectures at the School of International Affairs, and I came prepared with prewritten questions. The videos are currently being edited at the Center. Those that I interviewed were: Greg Kruczek and Professor Graham about their research; Mr. Peter Van Buren about his time spent in Iraq; and Fawad Sultani about his career path. The guests spoke with me about their experience with Penn State and the importance of global studies.

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“The Interviews”



Left: Penn State alumnus Fawad Sultani discusses his path to international studies at the School of International Affairs at Penn State and his subsequent position as the Program Implementation Coordinator at the Swiss Committee for Afghanistan.

Right: Penn State alumnus Greg Kruczek, joined by Professor Graham, talks about his career preparation while studying at the School of International Affairs at Penn State.



Left: Interviewing Peter Van Buren about his books, “We Meant Well” and “Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the #99 Percent.”

This will be my last semester as an intern for the CGS. I will be graduating and moving on to a job within my field. To all my fellow coworkers, I wish you the best in your endeavors. To my supervisor Sarah, I wish you a happy and fulfilling life. I enjoyed my time here at the Center and I may visit again someday down the road. I have always found that I'm happiest when I am busy. So, don't be alarmed if you see me working like a mad man and wearing a grin; it's just me enjoying myself. Until we meet again...

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Security Risk and Analysis