

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF HELPING OTHERS



An internship in Washington, D.C., gave recent graduate **Zeria Cummings** a taste of what the capital city has to offer. Now she has returned to work for City Year, an organization that partners with public schools in high-poverty communities to help increase graduation rates and to bridge the gap between the support students need and what their schools actually provide. City Year is a highly selective organization, with only 2,700 participants chosen worldwide.

As part of the City Year team, Cummings is mentoring and tutoring students and serves as an additional resource for them within the schools.

“I wanted to work for City Year because I wanted to do something productive and meaningful,” she said. “The work I’m doing is challenging, but so rewarding.”

Before joining City Year, Cummings, who graduated in May with a BA in Humanities—Pre-Law, interned in summer 2015 with the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., an independent, nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans. Cummings worked in their development department where she researched prospective donors, drafted briefings for donor events, and updated donor files.

“I thoroughly enjoyed it,” she said. “I got to learn about the different issue areas that I could be involved with and that made me think about what I wanted to do after I graduate.”

Her goal is to eventually have a career in law dealing with issues of women’s rights, poverty, and community development.

When Cummings first came to MSU, she was a Political Science—Pre-Law major, but later changed to Humanities—Pre-Law.

“I changed my major because I wanted a more holistic view on the world, and I wanted more of a humanitarian aspect to my studies,” she said. “I also got to choose from a plethora of different classes. I got to take a lot of classes in global studies and sociology in addition to pre-law courses.”

Cummings said her favorite classes were the Global Studies courses.

“The Global Studies program is really small itself, so you know everyone in it, and it’s also super engaging and there’s a lot of different readings that you do,” she said.

However, some of her most educational experiences came outside the classroom. Besides her internship, Cummings was an Intercultural Aide for the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions, Public Relations Director for TEDxMSU, a Tour Guide for the Residence Education and Housing Services Outreach Office, and a member of the Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience (MRULE).

As an Intercultural Aide, she helped create a space of community within the residence halls and worked to bridge the gap between domestic and international students. Then, as the TEDxMSU Public Relations Director, she oversaw all the social media and worked to promote the event.

“I attended the first TEDxMSU in 2015, and I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of,” Cummings said. “I had never done anything with public relations before, but I wanted to be in a role within the board of directors because I wanted to share that passion that I have for TED and all that it accomplishes.

“Aside from learning what public relations is, I definitely got a feel for what actual passion is. Being able to put all of my time and energy into something and see a final product and be extremely happy with it is something I didn’t think I was ever going to feel. I think that is something people should try to strive for. You may never find it in your first couple years. It took me to my fourth year to find what passion actually feels like.”