

MY GIP EXPERIENCE

Global Affairs in Cape Town

Brenda Ibarra

Major: International Development Studies

Term Abroad: Summer 2023

Internship Title: Employment Access Intern

Internship Company: The Scalabrini Centre



What were your primary responsibilities as an intern?

During my internship I was tasked with helping the Employment Access programs improve their processes and procedures to increase the efficacy and efficiency of their direct care services to the migrant and refugee communities in South Africa. To accomplish this I worked closely with several different program coordinators and the department director to understand the needs of the target population and brainstorm innovative changes.

What was your biggest accomplishment at your internship?

Through our collaboration we effectively developed a monitoring and evaluation framework for several programs that aimed to accurately collect data on service success rates. Data collection is imperative to the sustainability of the initiatives as it is utilized to solicit future grants from international funders.

How did you balance work and academics, while finding time to explore your host city/country?

As a non-traditional student, choosing to participate in this program was a great sacrifice for me so my priority was always focused on the work I was doing with the organization. This meant that I spent far less time than my peers exploring our host city and struggled to keep up with my academics as I had the most intensive internship workload of my cohort. The best advice I can offer: determine what kind of experience you want to prioritize and be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to achieve it.

What skills did you learn during your internship that you believe will transfer to your future career?

It afforded me the ability to experience workplace culture in a global context, an imperative for a career in international development. I learned how to navigate different communication styles, variations in conflict resolution, and culturally relevant values and ethics implemented in the workplace.

What was the most memorable aspect of your internship experience?

The relationships I formed with my coworkers, internship coordinators, friends within the local South African community. While brief, this experience allowed me to gain an even greater appreciation for the complexities and challenges in the developing world.

