"A Summer in the Capital City"

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

In higher education, students’ studies can be in two large divisions – humanities and sciences. Since I was 12 years old I knew I wanted to do something in the field of humanities. Therefore, when I was applying to Ball State University, I already knew I wanted to do telecommunications/journalism.

When I started my college career, I realized there were many opportunities to be involved. I never hesitated to be part of student organizations. Three weeks into my first semester, I was already writing for our Emmy-winning, daily TV newscast “NewsWatch.”

It did not take long for me to realize that the life of a telecommunications/journalism major needs to be filled with out-of-the-classroom involvement. Student-run media offers great opportunities for students to be involved outside the classroom. Ball State’s immersive learning approach also is vital for students to be prepared once they have to make the jump to the real world.

In addition to being involved in student media, it is imperative to land internships in order to polish your skills even more. Where you end up after your four years in college is connected with your internship experiences. I had two internships. The first one was in the summer of 2010 as a news department intern at WXIN-TV in Indianapolis. The second one was as a reporter in the Latin America Television Division of the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. This last experience was incredible and life changing. Therefore, I wanted to document my experience in the nation’s capital. I also hope to influence and inspire other students to pursue the internship of their dreams.
Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank my parents. My father, Jose Alberto Pimienta, and my mother, Hidys Morella Hernandez, have supported me unconditionally from the day I was born. I cannot picture my life without them. My brother, Thomas Alberto Pimienta Hernandez, is a constant inspiration and has my back no matter what happens. I also want to thank the rest of my family. I am the luckiest person in the world to have them. I also want to thank God for giving me such a great family and such great opportunities. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you so much professor Sheryl Swingley for your time, support and consideration. I would not have had the opportunity of being in Washington, D.C., without you. Thanks for being a facilitator of goals.

Thank you to every single person at the Latin America Division of the Voice of America. They are one of the most heartwarming and human groups of people I have ever met. They were absolutely incredible, and to this day I can call them my friends.

Thank you to all my professors at Ball State University and all of the people that have set a system into place where students can easily be prepared for the real world once they leave this institution.
I. It all started when ...

It was the fall of 2010. I was extremely focused on my classes for the semester, but I was also new to some of the roles I had in student media. That semester I started anchoring and reporting for “NewsLink Indiana,” Ball State’s daily live newscast. The thought of internships was not yet crossing my mind. In our field, we usually start looking for summer internships at the beginning of the spring semester. That semester I also met Professor Sheryl Swingley because she was teaching one of my journalism classes. I still remember this moment as it had happened yesterday. One day, around the middle of the semester, Professor Swingley was about to hand me a graded assignment when she said that she thought I would be interested in attending a speaker that was going to be on campus in October. She also wrote on the graded assignment that this would be a speaker that I would thoroughly enjoy. Little did I know that that conversation and that note would bring such a great opportunity.

The day of the lecture arrived. I had a reminder in my agenda. The lecture speaker was Navbahor Imamova, a Ball State alumnus who was now working in the Uzbeki Division of the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. Imamova is originally from Uzbekistan. She did her undergraduate studies in India and then she decided to come to Ball State for a master’s degree in journalism. Imamova talked about her experiences here at the university. Many of the things she said that day really hit home with me because I am also an international student from Venezuela that came to Ball State to study telecommunications/journalism. Many of the opportunities and challenges she mentioned she had during her years here at BSU were comparable to the ones I had had.

After the lecture, I was inspired and felt that I needed to thank Ms. Imamova for the incredible hour and a half she gave us. I was not the only student trying to talk to
her. Many other classmates also wanted to have a small conversation with her after the lecture. Therefore, there was a big group of people all around her, once again, listening to what she had to say.

At the end of her conversation with us, she asked if any of us was interested in internships. She said the Voice of America would be a terrific place for any telecommunications/journalism student to intern. After listening to her story and the things she had been doing at VOA, I knew that I also wanted to be part of that. Right away, I told her that I was interested in interning at VOA. We talked for about 10 minutes more, and then she gave me her business card.

Normally, media outlets do not start to receive intern applications to fill out their summer positions until January, and this process normally goes through March. Therefore, October was way too early for me to apply. Nevertheless, I kept in contact with Ms. Imamova not only because I was interested in the internship, but she was just a great journalist. Many times I had questions about our major that I would email her about.

I went back home to Venezuela during Christmas break of 2010, and I told my parents that I really wanted to apply for this internship in Washington, D.C. They were absolutely thrilled about it. They knew that would be a great opportunity for me not only professionally but also personally. They know how much I enjoy politics so they also thought that would be a great place for me to intern and live at for a summer.

My parents already knew how I heard about this opportunity. After the lecture back in October, I called my parents to let them know how excited I was after hearing what Ms. Imamova had to say. My parents were 100 percent supportive with the move that I wanted to make and with my desires to apply for this internship.
I have been extremely blessed to always have the support of my family with my career and personal decisions. It is extremely important as a young person to have a great system of support, and I cannot be thankful enough for that. Also, having to move thousands of miles away from my parents when I was 17 years old also created a great communication between us. By being so far away, it is imperative to have good communication with your parents. Thankfully this fact came naturally with my family and me. Therefore, the distance gap never felt overwhelming.

On top of that, I have always been busy doing something in college either for a class or for student media. I am that kind of a person who feels uneasy when I stop or have too much free time. I would strongly recommend students to work on having great communication with your parents. There is no one else out there who would want something better for your life than they do. They love you unconditionally, and they will always be there.

After a comforting and heartwarming month back in Venezuela with my family, it was time to come back to the cold temperatures in Muncie and to my many responsibilities. Taking my involvement in student media to the next level was always on my mind since my freshman year. So this semester was no exception. However, the thought of getting the internship in D.C. was constantly on my mind. I prepared all my requirements, such as my résumé and cover letter. By February of 2011, I sent all my paperwork to the Human Resources Department at the Voice of America. I was still emailing back and forth with Ms. Imamova so she asked if I could also send her my résumé and cover letter.

It was the middle of March of 2011 when I went to visit my aunt in Indianapolis. On my way there, I received a call on my cell phone. I took it out of my pocket, and the
telephone number started with 202. Back at that time, I did not recall immediately that
the area code for Washington, D.C., was 202, even though I have seen the three-digits
before when I was applying for the internship. I answered. I heard the voice of a woman
in Spanish saying: “Is this Alberto Pimienta?” I said, yes. The person on the phone
consequently said: “Hi, Alberto. I am Clara Dominguez, the director of the television
division of the Latin America Division of the Voice of America in Washington, D.C.”

Right after that statement I had no idea what to say. My legs were shaking, I was
short of words. So I tried to play cool. (I think it kind of worked). She said she was
calling me to set up an interview. My excitement was out of this world. I did not know
what to say at the end of our conversation other than thank you. I probably said that
around six times. I could not believe this was actually happening. I was a step closer to
going a great internship in the political nation of the world. Words could not describe
how excited I was.

The day of the interview arrived. Some nervousness was kicking in while I was
waiting for the call. Once again, I knew I had to be calm and play it cool. The phone
rings and I see 202. I knew it was her. Deep breath, here we go ...

The conversation lasted about 10 minutes. During the first four minutes, Ms.
Dominguez asked me about my previous experience. Five or six minutes into the
conversation, Ms. Dominguez said they would love to have me on board as a summer
intern. I could not believe what I was hearing. It was official.

For the next five minutes, she talked to me about what I was going to be doing.
She told me I was going to be helping reporters and producers with their main newscast,
called “El Mundo al Dia.” She also told me I would get the chance to go to the Capitol
and other places in D.C. to cover news stories. I was beyond excited so I asked no further questions. Washington, D.C., was now waiting for me. I had gotten the internship.

The next months consisted of me being extremely excited with all the things I was doing in student media. Spring semester 2010 was magical. So many great things were happening, and I also was getting ready to head to Washington, D.C., once the semester was over. From March up until mid-April, I found a place to live in D.C., and I had my plane ticket so I was pretty much set.

Washington, D.C., is a super costly city. Therefore, I saved a lot of money during the spring semester in order to lessen the costs for my summer in D.C. As I said before, my spring semester was fantastic. However, a couple of weeks before leaving for D.C., something big was also about to happen ...

The Telecommunications Department at the end of every spring semester organizes a banquet. During this banquet, recognition is given to faculty and alumni in addition to scholarships to current students in the department. I applied for three different scholarships and a special recognition award during the time I had my interviews with Clara Dominguez from VOA. Students never hear back from the department. You find out if you win at the banquet. The whole process is kind of nerve-wracking because there is no way of knowing in advance. I was extremely anxious the day of the banquet so I talked with my dad. He told me to relax and be positive. My dad said he had a great feeling. After talking to my dad, I started to feel more at ease. Nevertheless, I was still kind of nervous. I had no idea what was coming.

I arrived at the banquet and sat at one of the tables with a couple of my friends. Before the awards ceremony, there is a dinner. I was having a nice conversation and
good food with my friends so the anxious feelings vanished. Dinner was almost over, and it was announced they were going to start the awards ceremony.

Right after hearing that I did not feel nervous anymore, and I felt at ease. Maybe this was life/destiny/God or whatever you believe in telling me that I needed to be calm for the amazing night that was about to take place. It was time to announce the first scholarship. My friends at the table were still talking, and I told them to shut up. My friends were pretty shocked because I would never tell anyone to shut up in a million years. I was just trying to hear the name of the winner.

One of the TCOM professor seconds later said, “... and the winner is Alberto Pimienta.” I could not believe it. I was extremely excited, honored and blessed. I felt so many emotions in a matter of seconds. To this day I cannot describe in words how I felt. It was extremely humbling to go up there to the podium and thank the selection committee for that honor. The awards ceremony continued.

Now it was time to announce the winner of an internship award. This award consists of $2,000 that helps students pay for the multiple cost that an internship entails. I was in my seat praying in my mind. A couple of seconds later I heard my name when the second award of the night was announced. I could not believe what was happening. I go up for the second time; it was surreal to me. After I came back to my table, I was holding the certificates and talking to my friends. They were congratulating me, and the only words I could articulate were “thank you.” It was such an honor.

After two awards, I was not waiting for anything else. I texted my family back home, and I told my dad that he was right when he said he had a good feeling about the night. While I was distracted texting back and forth with my parents, the TCOM faculty were about to announce the winner of the TCOM Award, which is a $1,000. The
professor giving away the award made a joke, saying something like “we should probably make this student sit a lot closer to the podium so he stops walking so much. The winner is Alberto Pimienta.”

I could not believe what was happening. This was the third award of the night. I will never be able to explain how that walk from the table to the podium felt when everybody is clapping at you, shaking your hand. It was such a special moment. My friends could not believe it. The faculty could not believe it. I was just in shock. I did not know what to say, but there was one thing I knew: I was incredibly thankful for the opportunity. Last but not least, I also took home the Junior of the Year Award totaling four awards in one night. All the faculty members and the chairman of our department told me I set a record for honors received in the TCOM Department.

I was honored, blessed, thankful and happy for representing my family so well. In a matter of hours, thanks to the efforts of years in my classes and my involvement with student media, I had $3,000 that would help me pay for Washington, D.C., and $2,000 that would go toward tuition and fees. The reality of Washington, D.C., was closer than ever with this money in hand.

Sometimes we as students do not aim for more prestigious internships because of one factor: money. These internships are normally located in the biggest cities of our nation. The bigger the city, the bigger the cost. One huge piece of advice that I give fellow students is to apply for these internships and also apply for awards and scholarships that would help lessen the economical burden. Money should not be an excuse to not try to get a big internship. The money is there. I am not only talking about the TCOM department. Different departments always have monetary awards that can help students pay for these amazing experiences that make us grow professionally and
personally. So once again, do not make money an obstacle. These big internships are waiting for you.

After an amazing spring semester and extraordinarily TCOM Banquet, I was ready to head to Washington, D.C., to start my internship May 9, 2011 – three days after my last final exam of the spring semester.

II. I am in the political capital of the world.

It was Sunday, May 8, 2011. After I flew from Indianapolis to Milwaukee and then Milwaukee to Washington, D.C., I landed at Ronald Reagan Airport at around noon.

I had no idea where I was. I did not know where the airport was located. All I knew was that it would take me 25 minutes to get to the place where I was going to live for the summer if I rode the Metro. It was an extremely hot day in May – hotter than usual. I took my luggage and then I headed to a platform that would take me to the Metro station. I waited for about 10 minutes and realized that D.C. during the summer has comparable weather conditions to the ones we have back home in Maracaibo, Venezuela – hot and humid. The conditions kind of make me feel like home, even though I did not know where I was.

After a 25-minute ride on the Metro (D.C.’s transportation system is spotless.) and a 10-minute walk in the heat of the day with two 45-pound bags, I arrived at the place I was going to call home for the summer. Or so I thought.

I found the place where I was going to live at in D.C. online. On its website the company kept bragging about how interns completely loved the place, that it was perfect for the demands of D.C. summer interns. I saw pictures, the place was quite nice. It was a company that also had dorms in New York City so I trusted it. To my surprise when I
got there, I realized the place was more like a hostel. I did not have my own room. I was sharing a room with six more people in bunk beds, and we did not have separate closets. It was a total disaster. I knew I was not going to be able to live there for two months. I had no idea of other places where I could live, but I informed the hostel's manager that I was not going to stay there and that I needed my money back. They gladly agreed, but now I was homeless for the summer.

The manager of the hostel let me use its wifi. I needed a place to live, and I needed it now. It was less than 24 hours before I was supposed to start my internship. I looked and looked and found a room in an area of Washington, D.C., called Columbia Heights. I saw pictures. It looked pretty nice, and it was relatively close to the "perfect place for interns" fiasco. I called the landlord, and he told me he was in Virginia. It was Mother's Day so landlords were not really thinking about showing their houses. I begged him, and he told me he would be back at the house around 10 p.m. My instant response? I will be there.

It was 10 p.m. on Sunday, and I was finally seeing the place where I could potentially be staying for the summer. I liked it. It was a good price. It was really nice, but nothing luxurious. (If you are a high-maintenance person, you will need $1500 a month to pay for rent in D.C.). So I took it. After 10 hours of homelessness, I had a place to live again. However, I was not going to be able to move in until Monday afternoon. So even though I did not want to, due my lack of options, I had to stay at the hostel for the first night right before starting my internship the next morning. Calling to tell VOA that I was going to have to start Tuesday was not an option.
On Monday morning I woke up early, took a shower, put my suit on and headed to VOA after asking the hostel manager if I could leave my stuff there and after paying for the night I stayed there.

I took the green Metro line heading south at the Georgia Avenue – Petworth Station. I stopped at L’Enfant Station, walked two blocks, and I saw the huge building. It was the Voice of America headquarters.

**What is Voice of America?**

According to the media outlet’s website, it is “a dynamic multimedia broadcaster funded by the U.S. Government, broadcasts accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news and information to an international audience.”

“It started in 1942 as a radio news service for people living in closed and war-torn societies. It has grown into a multimedia broadcast service. VOA now reaches people on mobile devices and Facebook, through Twitter feeds and call-in programs – using the medium that works best for specific audiences. VOA’s work, which appears in numerous languages and is disseminated on various media platforms, is governed by the VOA charter, signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976.”

The charter states, in part, that “VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.” That is why those words are featured on the VOANews.com banner. The charter also states that “VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinions on these policies.”

At VOA, I was an intern specifically in the Latin America Division. There are many divisions at VOA, each one monitoring and reporting on different areas of the
world. VOA broadcasts to more than 140 million people every day. It also produces content for TV, radio, Web and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

In the Latin America Division, there are three subdivisions: TV, radio and Web. I was working precisely for the TV side of the division, at least in the beginning. Later in the summer, I also started doing stuff for the radio and the Web.

After all the drama that happened the previous day, I was finally at the VOA headquarters about to step in to the Latin America Division. I walked in, and I said that I was looking for Clara Dominguez, managing editor of the division. At that moment, I did not know, but the executive producer for the newscast that I was going to work on directed me to Ms. Rodriguez’s office. I introduced myself. She said she was really happy I made it to D.C. and that they were glad to have me. Subsequently, we left her office, and she introduced me to the team. Everybody was incredibly nice so we were off to a great start. Everything was going great.

I had less than an hour at the division when the executive producer of the newscast, “El Mundo al Dia,” I was interning for asked me if I was interested in editing a news story that was going on air that night. She asked me if I knew how to use Final Cut Pro, a video editing software, and I said yes. That has been something I have been doing at Ball State for the past two and half years. I edited the story, and it made it on air. I could not believe something I edited made it on air, and people from Mexico down to Argentina were able to watch a project I worked on. I was extremely excited. I could not believe they let me work on something that made it on air – the first day.

In TV news internships, it is really rare when employers allow you to have projects or stories you cover on air. Therefore, I was not expecting at all what was about to happen the next day.
After the first day, I went over to the hostel, took all my stuff and moved to my new place. I bought some food and bed sheets at a Target that was four blocks away from the house, ate, made the bed and went to sleep. I was exhausted.

I got to the Division early the next morning. The producers and reporters were not there so I went to my cubicle and started reading the news to be updated with any stories that we would have to cover during the day.

Maria Franco, the executive producer of the newscast, arrived shortly after I did. She said hello and then she went to her desk. I let her get settled in for about half an hour, and then I headed to her cubicle to ask if there was something I could do to help. She said, "Would you like to go out today and do some reporting?" I instantly said yes. I could not believe they were going to give me the chance to shadow a reporter for a whole day. I was beyond excited. I was waiting for the reporter to get there when another producer for the show introduced himself. His name is Gil Cabrera. He was going to be my photographer for the day. In TV news, there is normally a reporter and photographer. Therefore, after he said that, I was still waiting for Ms. Franco to tell me who the reporter was.

Twenty minutes passed so I went to ask her who was going to be the reporter I would cover the story with that day. She said to my surprise: "you." I thought I did not understand what she said so I asked again, and she said, "You will cover the story."

I could not believe what was happening so I asked if my story was actually going to be on air, and she said, "Well, of course!" That whole conversation was incredibly surreal. I was a little nervous, but I never mentioned that to her.

I said, "Great and thanks for the opportunity."
Right after that, Gil and I left the division. The story we got assigned was about the importance of the Latino vote in U.S. elections.

We interviewed an analyst, and we also interviewed what we called MOSs (man or person on the street). These are people you find on the streets and ask them if they want to be on TV for a news story. This is always particularly hard because people do not normally want to be on TV. It took me a while, but we found volunteers. We also arranged different shots that we needed for the story, and then we headed back to the HQ.

I got back, watched the footage, wrote the story and edited. TV deadlines are tough. It takes some time to report, write and edit a story. Our stories are supposed to be ready at 4:30 p.m. Mine was in around 4:26 p.m. It was a close call, but I made it. After I finished, I headed to the control room to wait for the newscast at 5:00 p.m. to see the first story I covered for VOA.

The story looked great on air. Everyone at the division congratulated me and asked me how old I was. I said “19.” They were all shocked at how young I was. The whole afternoon was special. Seeing your story airing for millions and millions of people is something invaluable. I felt for the first time that my moral duty as a journalist to inform an audience on a specific topic was being fulfilled. It was a special moment.

It was only my third day at VOA, and they assigned me three stories. I knew that from Wednesday until Friday I had something to work on, and these stories were also going to air on the newscast. By Friday they assigned me another story. By the end of the first week at VOA, it was clear that the division trusted me enough to have me on air. I had the feeling I was going to be on air for the whole summer. Everything happened so fast but thankfully I delivered and they trusted in my work ethic and ability.
I did not know my exact role yet, but for the summer I was not going to be the intern. I was going to be considered one of the team. For the next months, I was going to be a reporter for the Latin America Division of the Voice of America.

As I said before, my involvement and role at the Voice of America since the very beginning was more than an everyday intern. My stories were airing in the newscast so I became a reporter for the division. I was extremely lucky and blessed with this opportunity. This does not normally happen. Media outlets rarely trust college students to be on air. In my case, there was something that told them that they could trust in my professional abilities. It was an honor. I am extremely thankful. And I grew up so much professionally as you will learn next.

III. “Alberto Pimienta, for the Voice of America from Washington, D.C.”

As I said before, for the next two months I interned at VOA, but my role and responsibilities were the same as any other reporter. Usually, my main beat was U.S. and Latin American politics. I felt comfortable with the beat because I had a great interest and passion in those two topics since I was young. And when I got to the U.S. in 2009, I also fell in love with the politics and news in the U.S.

During the more than 60 days that I was an intern at the division, I covered more than 40 stories. However, there are always special stories that journalists remember for specific reasons. I had many of those during that summer when I had the opportunity to interview different political figures.

This project also includes the most memorable stories that I covered during my months at the Voice of America. (See DVD.) However, I would like to add some commentary to the stories.
I was only 19 years old when I was in D.C. For the past two years, all I had done was local TV news. I had a deep understanding of political events and figures, but I had never done political and international reporting until I got to VOA. Therefore, the amount of experience that I got by working on those local stories was invaluable. The best way to learn a craft is by doing it. At VOA I got to go to another level with my reporting, which is one of the many purposes of an internship.

So, when I would go to news conferences or when I had to interview big political figures like presidential candidate Rick Santorum, it is an understatement to say that I was nervous. However, I quickly discovered there was an extremely essential task a journalist always needs to do. This is to do research, research and then some more research.

Once again, when I had to interview people like Rick Santorum or Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, I researched a ton. These political figures have extremely hectic schedules so they are not going to be able to have an interview with you for 10 minutes but more like three minutes. Also, if you are in a news conference, you will have the chance to ask only one question. I quickly learned that I had to do a great amount of research in order to make sure that I was asking the right questions because saying that time was limited is an understatement. Time is gold when you have the opportunity to talk to these heavy contenders in the political arena.

Overall, the two biggest lessons I learned was to do research and read everything I could in order to be up to date with everything that’s going on in the news world.

Another great lesson was organizing my time. You get into your cubicle. You get assigned your story. You have to do some research. You need to go cover it. You need to
shoot the story. Then you come back, listen to your interviews, write your story and then edit it. You have to do all of this even when the product is about 2 minutes. It takes around seven to eight hours to do a TV news story from scratch. Therefore, I had to make sure that I was dividing and organizing my time properly, or I would not make the deadlines.

My writing skills also got better. In broadcast news we need to write in a conversational way. We also need to get used to writing as fast as we can due to deadlines. My reporting and interviewing skills also improved. After you talk to such big political figures, you feel you are ready to talk to and interview anyone. As a reporter you need to make interviewees feel comfortable, but you also need to be comfortable with the questions you are asking. This comfort comes from being prepared for an interview through research. I discovered that you need to show the interviewee that you know what you are talking about. In the environment I was working in, I was expected to be knowledgeable of all of the questions I was asking. Also, you want to gain the respect of the people you are covering, and you want to make sure political figures see that, even though you are young, you know what you are talking about. In general my reporting and the way I ask questions also improved.

My on-air delivery and the tone and articulation of my voice as I recorded the tracks for my stories also got better. Many of the reporters at VOA gave me great advice. You need to sound authoritative, to convey that you know what you are talking about. Yet you have to sound familiar and approachable.

Every single day that I was at the division I learned something new. Every story I made needed to have a stand up. This is part of the branding of VOA and the reporter. You want people to recognize who you are, and you also want them to remember who
you work for. It’s a combination of the public saying, “I know who you are; I trust you, and I also know and trust the organization you work for.”

This is how things work in the real world. During my previous experience in Ball State media, I was not aware of that because it is not commercial media.

When I first started interning at the division, I thought I was only going to be creating content for our TV products. Nevertheless, one day I was talking to one of the anchors for the radio department. His name is Leonardo Bonett. We were talking about our home countries. Bonett is also from Venezuela. As we talked, he mentioned he was getting ready for his show. I asked if I could watch. He agreed.

A couple of hours later, I went down to the radio studios right before the show started. Bonett told me to grab some headphones, and he invited me in to the actual booth where he does the show. He then tossed me a script, and he said, “You are going to do this with me.” I thought it was a joke. It was not. Bonett had heard some of my TV stories, and he wanted me to co-host periodically his radio show called “Ventana al Caribe.” That’s how I ended up also working and interning as a co-host for the radio department.

The radio opportunity was incredible. I could not believe I was on air on TV and now also on radio for millions of people to listen all around Latin America. Bonett was a mentor to me. He gave me so many tips regarding my delivery and my voice. Radio is a different monster. You have to tell so much more with your voice because you do not have pictures or video accompanying you. Therefore, that was a great experience that complemented my overall skills and led to the betterment of my abilities as a broadcast journalist.
My TV stories were also being used by the radio and the Web department. Different VOA employees put them on air on various radio shows throughout the day, and they uploaded them to the VOA Noticias website.

My opportunities to be published at VOA continued to grow throughout my internship. People were not only seeing my stories, but now they could also hear them. If they missed the newscast for some reason, they could watch or listen to them online.

Overall, the reception I got at the Latin America Division of the Voice of America was absolutely amazing. Everybody treated me as a friend or a coworker. During my months there, I never felt like I was an intern. They really gave me great opportunities, and thankfully I was able to deliver. I never doubted I was going to able to do a good job, but I was nervous because it was my first taste of real-world journalism.

One of the other things I learned and that I would like to convey to fellow students and people in general is to never be afraid of new things. Never be afraid of new places and change. Change is good for character and personality building and for the improvement of your abilities and capabilities as a professional. I also think it makes you a better human being.

Do not be scared of changes in life. Just trust in yourself and trust in your skill set. Work hard and everything will be just fine. Also, never be afraid of accepting professional challenges. Always say yes to those opportunities even though it is the first time you are doing it. You will enjoy these opportunities, and subsequently you will deliver.

In general, the summer I spent in Washington, D.C., did not only make me grow as a professional but also as a human being. Professionally, I was able to do stories and participate in projects that exceeded my expectations. I never thought all of my stories
would make it to air. I never thought I would be a co-host a radio show with an international audience. I never thought my stories also would be broadcast on the radio and via the Web. The Latin America Division was one opportunity after another.

When I was in D.C., I was constantly thinking about a phrase from Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu: “Opportunities multiply as they are seized.” I could not agree more. Opportunities will only come your way if you pursue them. So I encourage you to get out there and work toward our goals and dreams.

My development as a person also was very important. Washington, D.C., was the first city I moved to without having any idea of what to expect. When I came to Muncie, Ind., when I was 17 years old to start college, I already knew what to expect at least geographically. I knew what the university buildings looked like and what kind of a place Muncie was because I had already been here for a visit. But D.C. was a completely new city for me, and I loved it.

This uncertainty of where you are going and being in a new city during the first couple of weeks really helps your independence as a person. Being in a place where I have absolutely no family and I did not know anyone prior to my arrival was an attractive challenge to me, and I learned more about myself. If I needed something or an issue needed to be solved, it was my one and only responsibility. I did not have my parents with me, I did not have teachers around or friends in the beginning. Granted, after a while I made friends mainly with the younger team members at VOA and with other interns, and we shared common concerns. Overall, though, my sense of responsibility, independence and work ethic greatly improved.

In conclusion, my experience in Washington, D.C., at VOA was beyond belief. The trust that the division and coworkers put in me was huge, and I appreciate that. They
trusted me as a person, and they trusted my skills. They did not only make me a better professional with the experiences I had. But they also made me a more well-rounded human being.

It was an extreme honor to work in the Latin America Division. As I write this thesis, I deeply miss them. They are an incredible, talented, heartwarming group of people.

Also, D.C. is a beautiful metropolis. Living in the capital of the nation was also a pleasure. Having the chance to take runs around places like the White House or the National Mall still feel like dreams to me. Washington, D.C., offered such special kinds of experiences, it’s hard to believe that the summer of 2011 was real.

Voice of America gave me an invaluable experience that I will cherish forever and that I will always have with me as a professional newscaster. It also made me realize that there is not a single thing stopping the human mind when someone is willing to work hard for something.

Three years ago, when I first landed at the Indianapolis International Airport during my last teenage years, I would never have thought of the great opportunities I have been able to experience. I am extremely blessed to have the chance to receive a college education accompanied by terrific experiences. I believe I am extremely well prepared for my future and soon-to-be professional career.
Appendix A: Original Scripts (Spanish)
Las elecciones presidenciales de Estados Unidos están cada día más cerca y para nadie es un secreto cuán importante es obtener el voto hispano para cualquiera de los dos partidos en esta nación...

Representantes del partido demócrata aseguran que su partido está luchando por el bienestar de los hispanos, quienes no han estado exentos de las consecuencias de la depresión económica... La presidenta del comité nacional demócrata, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, es una de ellos...

“La comunidad hispana ha sido golpeada desproporcionadamente por la recesión y nosotros nos queremos asegurar que nuestra atención como partido, liderada por el presidente Obama, liderada por demócratas en el Congreso, sea continuar enfocándonos en la creación de trabajos, asegurar que podamos reducir la tasa de desempleo, poner a la gente a trabajar de nuevo...”

La presidenta del comité también se refirió al tema de la inmigración en Estados Unidos y habló sobre las recientes leyes sobre el tema, aprobadas en estados como Georgia...
“Los demócratas, bajo el liderazgo del presidente Obama, apoyan una reforma de inmigración integral, queremos asegurarnos de que podamos encontrar una manera para dirigirnos a los 12 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que están aquí, en este país. No tratarlos como los estados de Arizona y Georgia y otros estados que han aprobado leyes estatales inaceptables y que son contrarias a la esencia de Estados Unidos, que básicamente los retratan como culpables de algo, cuando lo único de lo cual son culpables es de ser quienes son.”

((NARR))

Por su parte, el presidente Barack Obama visitó Puerto Rico, esta semana, y fue recibido con banderas puertorriqueñas y estadounidenses, por los habitantes de la isla. El gobernador Luis Fortuño le dio la bienvenida, en la residencia oficial de La Fortaleza, donde se vivió un ambiente festivo. Al llegar a Puerto Rico, Obama expresó que su administración está comprometida con la isla...

((Barack Obama – Presidente de Estados Unidos))

“Durante mi campaña como presidente, yo prometí incluir a Puerto Rico no solo en mi itinerario si no también en mi visión de hacia dónde nuestro país debe ir. Estoy orgulloso de decir que mantuvimos esa promesa también.”

((NARR))

Pero muchos también opinan que el primer mandatario está tratando de asegurar el voto hispano... Más de 4 millones y medio de puertorriqueños viven en Estados Unidos mientras que en la isla, en sí, solo viven un número poco mayor a 3 millones 700 mil
personas. También en el país viven más de 50 millones de hispanos, según datos del Censo de la nación...

((STAND UP))

Otra de las críticas es que la razón de la visita del presidente Obama a Puerto Rico fue tratar de asegurar el estado de la Florida, extremadamente importante durante las elecciones presidenciales. Allí viven más de 840 mil puertorriqueños. Alberto Pimienta, desde Washington, para la VOA.
Ahora a Washington donde, durante el lanzamiento de una nueva agrupación, en el Congreso estadounidense, legisladores republicanos y demócratas coincidieron en lo que consideran preocupantes conexiones entre Irán y algunos países en Latinoamérica...

Mediante los esfuerzos del comité judío estadounidense, su Instituto Latinoamericano y diferentes legisladores norteamericanos, la agrupación latino judía del Congreso marcó su inicio, en una ceremonia, donde representantes políticos declararon que esta iniciativa servirá como puente para aumentar la interacción y el apoyo mutuo entre la población judía e hispana. Aparte de la creación de este nuevo grupo en el Congreso, los legisladores también expusieron algunas de sus inquietudes, como los lazos entre Irán y diferentes países en Latinoamérica.

“Una de las cosas que me preocupan a mí mucho es la presencia de Irán en Latinoamérica. Irán está haciendo muchos contratos, científicos y de todo tipo, con Latinoamérica, con varios países, los tienen con Cuba, los tienen con Venezuela, tienen con Nicaragua y es preocupante porque Irán es enemigo de los Estados Unidos, enemigos de Israel. Así que tenemos que tener esto en mente.”

Legisladores demócratas también se pronunciaron al respecto, mostrando que estas relaciones son un punto de preocupación para ambos partidos políticos...
“Irán es el más grande promotor y financista del terrorismo, en todo el mundo, y cada vez que avanzan en el hemisferio, es perturbador, y ellos han tenido progresos a través de su cómplice, Hugo Chávez, en Venezuela, quien ha trabajado con el gobierno iraní. Chávez ha permitido que un avión, una vez a la semana, llegue, desde Irán, parando en Siria y luego en Venezuela y retorna. Nosotros no sabemos realmente quién está en ese vuelo o lo que están haciendo, pero puedo decir que, sea lo que sea que estén haciendo, no es nada bueno y es una gran preocupación.”

Los legisladores señalaron que la creación de este grupo también ayudará a tratar situaciones en común entre Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica, ya que problemas como la presencia iraní en esta región son perjudiciales para ambas partes. Alberto Pimienta, desde Washington, para la VOA.
En el marco de un foro, en Washington, el pre candidato estadounidense a la presidencia, Rick Santorum, denunció que el presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez es una amenaza para la región.

En el foro, un panel de expertos discutió la posición que la religión ha tenido en el alcance de ambientes democráticos en diferentes naciones de Latinoamérica. Los expertos mencionaron que, durante las últimas décadas, en las cuales diferentes países en la región se han visto bajo el control de gobiernos autoritarios, la religión y las iglesias han luchado por poner fin a estas situaciones. Uno de los participantes fue el candidato a la presidencia de Guatemala por el partido VIVA, Harold Caballeros, quien dice estar comprometido a mejorar las condiciones en su país. Caballeros resaltó, como alegaron los demás expertos, la importancia de la religión en los procesos democráticos latinoamericanos...

"La reserva moral se encuentra siempre en la religión o en las iglesias. Y entonces de esta manera pueden aportar a través de los valores morales: tolerancia, paz, justicia, respeto a la ley. Se puede aportar gobernabilidad y por ende fortalecer la democracia."
El ex-senador Rick Santorum, próximo a anunciar su candidatura presidencial el 6 de junio, también se expresó, durante el foro, acerca del presidente Hugo Chávez y Venezuela, país al que considera la más grande amenaza en la región.

“Yo continuo viéndolos como una fuente de problemas para la región, como alguien que es una fuerza desestabilizadora en la región, alguien que está trabajando en fines directamente opuestos a nuestra seguridad y, pienso, de la economía de Latinoamérica”.

Los panelistas señalaron que países como Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, Colombia y El Salvador son solo algunas de las naciones que han visto como sus niveles democráticos han sido mejorados por la intervención de diferentes iglesias.

Expertos en el foro también alegaron que a pesar de que factores religiosos no han sido el principal catalizador para alcanzar democracias en Latinoamérica, estos factores sí han tenido una posición protagónica en estos movimientos. Alberto Pimienta desde Washington para la Voz de América.
Appendix B: Scripts Translated
The U.S. presidential elections are closer every day and it is no secret how important the Hispanic vote is for either party in this nation.

Representatives of the Democratic Party say that their party is fighting for the wellbeing of Hispanics, who have not been exempt from the consequences of the economic depression ... The Democratic National Committee chairwoman, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, is one of them.

"The Latino community has been disproportionately hit by the recession and we want to ensure that our attention as a party, led by President Obama, led by Democrats in Congress, is to continue focusing on job creation, ensure that we can reduce the rate of unemployment, putting people back to work ... "

The chairwoman of the committee also addressed the issue of immigration in America and spoke about the recent laws on the subject, passed in states like Georgia ...

"Democrats, under the leadership of President Obama, support comprehensive immigration reform, we are sure we can find a way to turn to the 12 million undocumented immigrants who are here in this country. Do not treat them as the states
of Arizona and Georgia and other states that have passed state laws that are unacceptable and contrary to the essence of America, they are portrayed as guilty of something, when all they are guilty of is to be who are."

((NARR))

For his part, President Barack Obama visited Puerto Rico this week and was met with Puerto Rican and American flags by the inhabitants of the island. Gov. Luis Fortuno welcomed Obama at the official residence of La Fortaleza, where he lived a festive atmosphere. Arriving in Puerto Rico, Obama said his administration is committed to the island.

((Barack Obama - President of the United States))

"During my year as president, I promised to include Puerto Rico not only in my itinerary but also in my vision of where our country should go. I am proud to say we kept that promise too."

((NARR))

But many also believe that the president is trying to secure the Hispanic vote. Over four and a half million Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. while in the island itself the number is 3 million 700 thousand people. Also in the country, there are more than 50 million Hispanics, according to the census of the nation.

((STAND UP))

Another criticism is that the reason for the visit of President Obama to Puerto Rico was
to try to ensure the state of Florida, extremely important during the presidential
election. Where there are more than 840 thousand Puerto Ricans. Albert Pimienta, from
Washington, for the VOA.
Now we go to Washington. During the launch of a new congressional caucus, Republican and Democratic members of congress agreed that the connections with Iran and some countries in Latin America are matters of concern.

Through the efforts of the American Jewish Congress, its Latin America institute and different members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the new Latino-Jewish Congressional caucus was created. During the ceremony, different political representatives said this initiative would serve as a bridge to increase the interaction and support of the Jewish and Hispanic population. During the creation of the new caucus, House Representatives also talked about their concerns on the region. One of them being the ties between Iran and different countries in Latin America.

“One of the things that worries me the most is the presence of Iran in Latin America. Iran is doing a number of treaties on fields like science and of other kinds with Latin America. They have one with Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua. This creates a concern because Iran is an enemy of the United States, an enemy of Israel, so we need to have that in mind.”

Democratic lawmakers also spoke about it, showing that these relationships are a matter of concern to both political parties.
"Iran is the largest supporter of terrorism around the world and every time they make an advancement in the hemisphere is disturbing. They have made progress through his ally Hugo Chavez in Venezuela who has worked with the Iranian government. Chavez has allowed that one airplane, once a week, arrives from Iran in Venezuela making a stop in Siria and then back. We do not really know who is in that plane but I can say that whatever it is that they are doing is nothing good and it's a big concern."

The lawmakers say that the creation of this group will also help deal with situations between the United States and Latin America, and that problems like the Iranian presence in this region are damaging to all the countries involved. Alberto Pimienta, from Washington for the Voice of America.
As part of a forum in Washington D.C., the former Pennsylvania Senator now soon to be running for president, Rick Santorum, said that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is a threat to the region.

At the forum, a panel of experts discussed the position that religion has had on the scope of democratic environments in different countries of Latin America. The experts mentioned that during the last decades, in which different countries in the region have been under the control of authoritarian governments, religion and the churches have struggled to overcome such situations. One participant was the presidential candidate of Guatemala for the VIVA party, Harold Caballeros, who says he is committed to improving conditions in his country. Caballeros also talked about the importance, as discussed by the other experts, of religion in Latin American democratic processes.

"The morality is always found in the religion and church. So in this way they can contribute through moral values like tolerance, peace, justice, respect to the law in the governability. Therefore strengthening democracy.

Former Senator Rick Santorum, close to announcing his presidential candidacy on June 6, also spoke at the forum, about President Hugo Chavez and Venezuela, which he considers the greatest threat in the region.
“I continue seeing them as a source of problems for the region, as someone who is a destabilizing force in the region, someone who is working against our national security and I think the economy of Latin America.”

Panelists say countries like Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and El Salvador are just some of the nations that have seen their levels of democracy improved by the intervention of different churches.

Forum experts also argued that even though religious factors haven’t been the main catalyst for achieving democracy in Latin America, these factors have had a leading role in these movements. Alberto Pimienta from Washington for the Voice of America.
Appendix C: Description of the program I used for my supplement
I used Final Cut Pro. This is the most common editing software in the news industry. The software is designed by Apple. It takes some practice to get familiar with the program. However, when you feel comfortable using it, Final Cut Pro is a huge editing asset that strengthens the work of a storyteller.

It took two months to gather the materials (stories) on my reel (as we called our portfolio in broadcast news). It took around six hours to edit my reel together.