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GW Career Quest Seattle 2018 Blog Post

When I was presented with the opportunity to apply in Career Quest Seattle this summer, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I had never been to the Pacific Northwest let alone ever considered living in Seattle, I had heard of most of the companies but had never considered working at any of them, and I wasn't even sure if it was something graduate students participated in. After being offered a spot with the Seattle cohort, my sole focus was getting to visit the Gates Foundation. As an MPH candidate in Global Health and someone who has always been interested in international development, I would love to one day work for the Gates Foundation and going on this Career Quest I had a one track mind that this was one step closer to attaining my goal. Each day as we visited a handful of companies in the Greater Seattle area, my perceptions of the companies was altered and I allowed myself to shift my focus.

I had ranked the companies we were going to visit by the ones that had the most notoriety and popularity. One of the places that ended up exceeding my expectations was Milliman. I had never heard of Milliman before and didn't have that much of an interest in visiting an actuary firm. I still have no interest in working for an actuary firm, but I was most impressed by our visit the because of the obvious investment they made in their employees growth and happiness. They had the most diverse panel amongst the companies in terms of positions, race, gender, and tenure. They were also a very employee- centric company and it was really fun to see how the employees were genuinely pursuing what they were passionate about.

While the Gates Foundation was the only organization we visited that was directly related to my field, I learned something from every site visit. It was helpful to get a glimpse of what the workforce will look like after I graduate with my Masters in the Spring and allowed me to understand what I want and don't want in my future place of employment. To work at the Gates Foundation is still a goal of mine, but during our visit with GW alumni who are current employees at the Foundation I realized that it is somewhere I want to end up and not where I want to begin my career. From our company visits with Facebook, Amazon, Starbucks, and Microsoft it was cool to see the faces and office spaces behind the companies of which we utilize their products and services daily.

Overall, I found that some companies were customer focused whilst others were more employee focused; some were in-between and some did not fit in those boxes. From each of them I learned how their unique company culture translates into their with customers and/or clients and how each employee is valuable in that process.