

Before I embarked to Seattle, I decided to mentally review my goals for the trip. In addition to networking with George Washington University alumni and Fortune 500 corporations, I wanted to absorb the culture of the west coast. Growing up in Scranton, PA, I had really only ever explored the east coast's headstrong culture. On weekends, I'd make the quick trip to NYC or Philly - loving the city life. However, as a senior graduating this fall, before I decided about where I wanted to work I felt like I needed to further explore the west coast.

Going into the experience I really had no idea what to expect. Prior to the trip, the furthest west I had been was Minneapolis! How laid back could the culture actually be? Would everyone be vegan and wear sandals to work? More importantly, how would this environment make me feel? Although it took me a while to get adjusted to the relaxed culture (I think I was the only one to be wearing a tie on the entire Microsoft campus), by the end of the trip I felt like I was able to present myself however I wanted to present myself; not necessarily conforming to the traditional suit and tie outfit. The culture was much more genuine than the ones I've been exposed to here on the east coast.

Another thing that surprised me was the extent to which I valued corporations that had a mission statement that their employees clearly believed in. Two stuck out to me. Starbucks' mission statement is "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time." Throughout our entire visit, their mission was reflected in how every employee talked about their job. Microsoft's employees were similar. They all related their jobs back to the mission of "empowering every organization and every person to achieve more."

All in all I was captivated by how different the west coast working culture is from the east coast working culture. I look forward to examining the differences closer as I make career decisions in the coming months.