

A Golden Opportunity in the Golden City

By: Gloria Yu

San Francisco is known for many things: its fog and rolling hills, architecture, hippies, landmarks, and nice, temperate weather all year round. It is also home to some of the world's most successful technology companies and Silicon Valley, one of the most capital rich and innovative hubs in the country. As a technology and entrepreneurship enthusiast, San Francisco is an entrepreneur's dream where one has the possibility to work among the "zero-to-one" innovators who are moving the needle in almost every industry imaginable: transportation, space exploration, virtual reality, artificial intelligence and many more. So when I heard about the SF Career Quest, I knew I couldn't miss out on the opportunity.

Although I had visited the Golden City a few times in the past, I was curious to see what new and exciting experiences the trip would bring me. As someone who had set few expectations before the program, I was pleasantly surprised that many of my expectations were exceeded by the end of the week. In total, we visited ten companies including big tech companies such as Google and Facebook; up-and-coming startups like Thumbtack and Cloudera; social enterprises like KIVA; and even an American professional basketball team, the Golden State Warriors. Not only did the diversity in companies give me an insider's look into each businesses' unique company culture, but it also gave me a great opportunity to reflect and compare the characteristics and values that I admired or disliked about each company. Did I want to work for a company that values creativity, social good, or secrecy? Furthermore, I was struck by the unique architecture of each workplace, and how each company used architecture, structures, and the forms to further reinforce its company culture, values, and purpose. For instance, Facebook's campus was designed by Disney's Imagineering to reflect its creative, whimsical, and strong hacker culture. On the other hand, companies such as Palantir had a quieter, more serious work environment which reflected the magnitude and type of projects the company took on. More than anything, the site visits allowed me to think about how my work surroundings and the co-workers I would be surrounded by would help shape the work I would do and ultimately the life I would craft for myself thereafter.

The trip exceeded my expectations in other ways as well. Between and after site visits at the end of the day, the group had some down time to see the city and relax. Thanks to a few California natives in the group, we were able to visit Dolores Park, the Golden Gate Bridge, the beautiful Mission District, and enjoy drinks on a rooftop bar. The best part of the trip was by far the people. Not only were the employers, organizers, and alumni extremely generous of their time, but the students that I met on this trip were diverse, interesting, and outgoing individuals. They all had interesting stories to share and I can honestly say that I learned something new from each one of them.

As my Career Quest experience draws to a close, I know that I will take these experiences to grow stronger personally and professionally. I can say without a doubt that this was truly a golden

opportunity in the one and only Golden City.