



Embarrassed and unexpectedly shy, I glared at my mother as she eagerly raised her hand at a GWU information session four years ago. In front of approximately 300 other prospective parents and students, she asked ever so knowingly, “What percent of GWU students, upon graduation, stay in the DC area?” I don’t remember what the exact figure was now, only that it was the clear majority.

What a silly question, I thought. As a freshman, four years down the road seemed like a lifetime away. And moreover, DC as a perspective home (almost 2,500 miles away from my small town bubble world of Berkeley, CA) seemed pretty ideal to me at that time. Soon, I was packing my bags and enthusiastically traveling from Berkeley, CA to Washington, DC for four years full of unknown opportunities.

Those last four years flew by. I took fascinating classes in Economics, American Sign Language, and Art History, experienced DC living in the suburbs and downtown, interned on capitol hill and for a public sector consulting practice, welcomed dozens of nervous students to GW during Colonial Inauguration, and spent my Junior year abroad at The London School of Economics. And through all those incredible experiences, I have come to value and appreciate my family and community on the West Coast beyond what I can express in a blog post. So when I heard GW was building out site-visit programs in California, I was pleasantly surprised. I signed up.

I arrived at our first hotel in Palo Alto with few expectations of the week ahead. The first hint that I would enjoy the week was when my upbeat and friendly roommate, Gloria, opened the door, introduced herself, and then gave me a pitch. She wanted me to help her set up a tech related

conference in D.C. Cool, I thought, maybe I'll even meet some interesting people.

While I enjoyed the visits to companies including Cloudera, Google, and Golden State Warriors (photographed above), my favorite part turned out to be the 11 students that were friendly, ambitious, and communally interested in learning more about how to be successful post-graduation. By the end of the trip, I had introduced Gloria to my mother, danced at a Latin club with Cristian, and taken half of the group to the renowned In-N-Out.

I developed professionally too. I learned about the main differences between East Coast and West Coast company culture, noticing mainly that SF companies put a great emphasis on "impact" instead of "value add". I realized how important it was to be at a company whose mission you believe in, rather than focus on the position title or perfunctory job responsibilities. I left feeling less intimidated by the employment space on the West Coast, and while I have accepted a job in DC, I am excited to one day explore some of the same companies that we visited on this trip. Though the best part, was learning new things around great company.