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The 11<sup>th</sup> Carroll Round undergraduate research in economics held at Georgetown University in Washington D.C brought together students from across the globe to present their dissertations and research projects over 4 days. Whilst all papers touch upon international economics the topics were extremely diverse with papers on Darwin economics, High-frequency trading and whether indigenous surnames cause discrimination in the labour market of Ecuador. Each student gets the opportunity to present their research in front of some of the most innovative undergraduates around the world and professors from Georgetown. Needless to say it is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Alongside the presentations and inevitable discussions about 'geeky' economics which take place in between there are some incredible extra-curricular activities that take place. This year's conference included a keynote speech by Jonathan Levin, Chair of the Economics department at Stanford and recent recipient of the John Bates Clark Medal. His talk was about the US health insurance markets. We were also treated to another speech by Gene Sperling, Director of the National Economic Council under President Obama and previously President Clinton. Both speeches were unbelievably delivered and extremely interesting. One of the best things about the conference is that you get the chance to talk to such important people afterwards and find out that they are actually very humble and surprisingly grounded despite their plethora of achievements. The inevitable questions to Gene Sperling about economics and politics in the run up to the election were asked, but once the mundane stuff was out of the way we asked the more pressing questions about his time co-writing and directing the West Wing television series. He was only too glad to answer and tell us about how he met his now wife on set!

If 'geeky' economics really doesn't sound like your thing, not to worry the students at Georgetown organise loads of fun things to do, meals out, coffee (in abundance) and of course the obligatory lawn games on the University campus. As a result the economics just slips in effortlessly amongst the talks between participants about anything. I, and I am sure Sam Evans and Chris Roth (the other Warwick participants this year) would agree, felt immediately at ease and struck up what will no doubt be some long lasting friendships in the space of just 4 days. I can't put into words just how much I would recommend the conference and would like to take this chance to thank both Yuxin Li (my supervisor) and Gianna Boero for nominating me to apply. Instead of trying to convince you to apply, which you all should if you are serious about your dissertation, I will just outline what we got up to and hope that it gives you a flavour for just how unique this opportunity is.

For more information on the conference and how to apply go to:

<http://carrollround.georgetown.edu>.

When my supervisor suggested that I should apply to the Carroll Round I was extremely humbled and honoured that she thought it worthy of even applying. My research title was 'The Determinants of Football Transfer Values: An age of financial restraint.' and as a result was quite specific to sports economics and hence I thought only die-hard football fans would be interested. Never the less I thought the program would be a good chance to get some much needed feedback on my project and get an understanding of how other students tackled their projects and what they chose to study. I also read about the keynote speakers, sifted through last year's papers and panicked that mine was not of the standard needed and got writing furiously in an attempt to 'make the cut'. It actually served as a great commitment device as the round require a draft paper much earlier than Warwick's deadlines for data and final presentations and as a result it helped me balance RAE with my other modules.

When I found out that I had been accepted to the Carroll Round and that Sam and Chris had too, two other students that I knew fairly well, I was ecstatic, not just because between Warwick and Georgetown the entire trip was paid for! It was clear after meeting up together at Heathrow airport that we would all have a great time and didn't stop having fun the entire flight. In fact the man sat next to us got fed up of us filming take off on the flip-camera provided by Warwick to document the trip, and left his seat and sat elsewhere.

We arrived at the hotel in Washington D.C. and had dinner with other participants from Latvia, Ukraine and USA. It was great to meet other enthusiastic economists who were really keen to share ideas and discuss projects. This shouldn't put you off though we also ended up talking about the dodgiest parts of New York and ice hockey, an eclectic mix, but we were an eclectic bunch...

The first day of presentations went smoothly and I learnt an awful lot about where exactly you can apply economics. After reading books like Freakonomics which are specifically designed to bring economics to the forefront of interesting applications, you soon realise that the other participants blew it out of the water with where they had applied stata and the results showed. Discussions of the papers were held after the presentations and were usually cut short because there were too many questions and the debate too rich, in one word, brilliant. In the evening that day we went to the Four Seasons Hotel and met Jonathan Levin and were subjected to a captivating talk about how the US should revolutionise their healthcare system, at least from an economist's viewpoint. If anybody wants to understand the slightest part of the current debate on Medicaid in the US they should read Levin's papers because they are enlightening.

Saturday saw all of Warwick's presentations including my own, which went well and it was at that point that I discovered potential Masters, PhD and 10 further years of research questions that followed on from my original RAE project. The discussion was brilliant and I was honoured to get such kind feedback. Chris captivated his audience with 'Homo-economicus' and Darwin, whilst Sam blew his crowd out of the water enough to later win the Best Participant award, thoroughly deserved! We then managed, somehow, to get over 3 hours out of Gene Sperling's busy schedule to learn exactly how Congress worked and its underhand tactics in the recent Medicaid debates and of course what the West Wing television set looks like! He was unbelievably generous in his time and convinced the most politics-phobic audience members to now follow this year's election. His advice to us budding economists was to 'hang around' the

sorts of people you want to be working with in the future and have a 'rough' idea for what you want to do in life with a plan B,C and D if need be. His story about volunteering for an entire year at 29 to work with a then unknown economics writer turning into a political campaign for Clinton going on to become chief economic advisor was truly inspiring and gives us all hope!

Alongside all of this I managed to, with Fabian, a Swiss student visit the Lincoln memorial at 3am, the best time to see it to avoid the crowds and see it lit up at night! We saw the Whitehouse too at a more respectable hour, but it was pouring with rain (I'm sure the video of this will be on the Warwick website soon). I hope it is clear just how much fun I had on the trip and the invaluable feedback and eye-opening comments I received for my project. As part of the Alumni network there will be reunions over the next few years and I expect to meet some of the future world leaders there as the calibre of other participants was outstanding. Throughout the conference we met a huge number of past alumni, which range from workers at the IMF, google, the World Bank and economic professors at Duke University.

I would recommend every single person to work hard and cherish the chance to apply stata to a project and potentially get the chance to apply for such an amazing opportunity. If you would like feedback on your current project or just want to discuss sports email me on: [thomasjpreston@gmail.com](mailto:thomasjpreston@gmail.com) and I will pass you onto Chris and Sam for the tough economics questions. But in all seriousness don't lose sight of this possibility and start early with your RAE to maximise your chances of participating in future Carroll Rounds.