



My internship experience at the PECC International Secretariat

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My internship at the International Secretariat of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) was a very valuable experience, both professionally and personally. It was an experience that brought me closer to Hong Kong, introduced me to Singapore and culminated in my return to Washington, DC. I felt privileged and extremely honoured to be chosen as the candidate to represent Hong Kong, especially because although I am a Hong Kong resident and consider Hong Kong my home, I am a USA citizen of Latino heritage. I have many fond memories and lessons learned, from my interview experience in Hong Kong to the PECC General Meeting in Washington DC, that I want to share about my internship experience.

When the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation interviewed me for the internship position, I was asked a wide array of questions related to the PECC such as its tripartite structure, its purpose and Hong Kong's role in international trade. These were challenging questions but the most important question, and one that I am sure that the committee was eager to ask was: why should Hong Kong choose you as its candidate?

I had a strong motivation and interest to have the privilege of representing Hong Kong because while working for a regional economic development corporation in America I realized that, while there is a growing interest for the "Rise of Asia", there is also a general lack of knowledge about its cultures. It is for this reason that I decided to move to Hong Kong, to live and learn the culture with the goal of contributing to continue to develop strong and sustainable economic cooperation's and bridge the cultural gap between the East and the West. I am grateful to the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation for sharing, trusting and supporting my vision.

After fulfilling the requirements to obtain my Singapore Training Employment Pass, I arrived in Singapore and began my internship program on 1st August 2011. My internship was to last for two months ending on September 30, 2011. I worked at the International Secretariat's office for seven weeks before travelling with its staff to the PECC General Meeting in Washington, DC during the last week of my

internship.

My role as an intern at the PECC International Secretariat in Singapore was to assist the staff with their tasks under the supervision of Betty Ip. At that time, the top priorities of the staff were the completion of the 2011 State of the Region report and assisting in the coordination of the PECC General Meeting in Washington, DC. Therefore, during the first half of the internship my role focused on assisting with the Survey of Opinion Leaders. I specifically contributed by compiling the received surveys and submitting them on the online database. This task was very interesting because it provided me the opportunity to have an insight into the perceptions, opinions and suggestions of the leaders of the PECC member economies about the economic and social issues that shape the world. Through their inputs, I learned that even though each of the PECC member economies encounter particular domestic issues and are naturally inclined towards protecting their key sectors, there are more commonalities than differences among the group. Particularly, there is a growing concern over issues such as Global Warming, Natural Disasters, labour shortages, high food prices and for the implementation of effective regulations to avoid future financial crisis's.

During the second half of the internship, I worked on summarizing and analyzing PECC reports and presentations related to topics of the World Trade Organization (WTO) such as the challenges and opportunities for completing the Doha Round and its impact on Labour Mobility, Trade/Investment & Services and Global Climate Change. This task was of particular interest to me because I had studied these topics in my Masters courses in International Economic Law at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This was a great opportunity where I was able to apply my legal knowledge while simultaneously learning new non-legal perspectives. Through this small sample of readings, I observed that there are inconsistencies in the analysis and conclusions between the WTO lawyers and economists. Therefore, although I understand that the difference of opinions have and will continue to produce constructive arguments and ideas, more cooperation and integration between these experts in PECC reports and activities would likely increase creativity, production, and agreements that would benefit all of the PECC stakeholders.

In addition to the summaries, I also searched for and compiled trade statistics from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other sources, and then examined changes and trends in PECC member economies' imports and exports during the period between 2007-2010. Moreover, I helped to analyze statistics to determine the top ten APEC traded products. These tasks were the most challenging experience of my internship because they forced to me to get reacquainted with working on Excel. I was a bit rusty at first but by the end of the internship I had regained my skills and learned new operations.

Previous PECC International Secretariat interns were encouraged to attend activities outside of the office; I was not the exception. These experiences are a great opportunity to meet people and to learn the latest information from the leading experts. This was the case when I attended a seminar hosted by the International Law Centre of the National University of Singapore about the "International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Investment Treaty Arbitration After 20 Years of Intense Use: Is there a need for greater institutional support, including appellate review of arbitral awards?" There I networked with faculty members and students from the NUS faculty of Law, prominent trade lawyers from Singapore and with members of the Singapore Ministry of Trade who were at the time negotiating the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). In addition to the outside of the office activities, I had the opportunity to attend other non-official PECC networking opportunities during my free time where my title as a PECC intern facilitated meeting very interesting people from different economic sectors and cultural backgrounds who were very interested in learning about the PECC and discussing the economic issues facing their economies. These interactions were not only interesting; they were very fun and helpful for my career.

Many of the lessons and memories of my internship in Singapore came from my daily interactions with my colleagues at the International Secretariat. From day one, they welcomed me and shared their vast knowledge about the International Secretariat's role and the PECC's history, its tripartite structure and the active cooperation amongst academic research fellows, government officials and business leaders.

Working with such a culturally diverse staff was a professional and personal enriching experience. I am grateful for all of their guidance, support and most importantly, for their friendship.

The highlight of my internship experience was my participation in the General Meeting in Washington, DC. This experience allowed me the privileged opportunity to interact with leaders and staff members from the PECC member economies. I cherished the opportunity to be able to have private conversations and discuss the most relevant economic issues of our time with brilliant minds such as the founders of the PECC and the rest of the distinguished members of the PECC Standing Committee.

During the event my tasks consisted of assisting the International Secretariat staff with the details of the event logistics. Additionally, I was assigned the task of assisting my supervisor with the group of fifteen Youth Delegates from the various PECC member economies, including Hong Kong. More specifically, I contributed by sharing with them my knowledge of international trade, the PECC and by collaborating with them in the written and oral reports to the Standing Committee.

I would like to extend the utmost of gratitude to Mr. Eduardo Pedrosa, Secretary General, Ms. Betty Ip, my supervisor, and to all of the members of the International Secretariat staff that I had the pleasure to personally work with for all of their attention and support. Additionally, I extend my gratitude and best wishes to Ms. Audrey SL Hon and the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation for trusting me and allowing me the honor to represent Hong Kong as its candidate.