



International Summer Research or Residency Travel Award

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Thanks to the Global Engagement Office International Summer Research Award, I was able to travel to Senegal as part of my research on the development and transitions of international student-athletes.

In a nation where the majority of students do not attend or complete high school, sport-centric academies have provided opportunities and motivation for thousands of young Senegalese students to continue their education beyond the norm. During my time in Senegal, I visited four distinct basketball-centric academies that have collectively sent hundreds of student-athletes to colleges throughout the U.S., including some of the most prestigious in our country (e.g. Duke University, University of Texas-Austin, Georgia Tech, & Georgetown University). At these academies, students of all ages, genders, and backgrounds work with coaches and teachers to develop their athletic, academic, and leadership skills. Although each has its own unique approach and purpose, they all are dedicated to the well-being and development of the whole student-athlete.

I also had the opportunity to visit the family homes of student-athletes who are currently in the U.S. to learn about the familial experience, culture, and upbringing of these young athletes who successfully made the transition to U.S. higher education. Each family graciously opened their homes to me so that I could experience their customs, language, and food. They also provided some insight into their family's goals and feelings about their children leaving the country for academic and athletic opportunities.



As the landscape changes immensely for both international students and college athletes, it is crucial for incoming student-athletes to be as prepared as possible for the challenges and opportunities that exist within U.S. higher education.

To make the trip a reality, I collaborated with Wisconsin-based non-profit organization HoopsHome, whose mission is to support international basketball athletes as they transition to life in the U.S. HoopsHome was founded and is run by UW-Madison alumna, Megan Soderberg.

I would not have had such a fruitful, rewarding, and inspiring experience without the openness of each academy, coaches, teachers, and family members. A special thank you to NBA Academy Africa coach and Senegalese basketball legend, Assane Badji, for serving as a guide, translator, and friend throughout the trip.



Estevan Molina with the General Manager of SEED Academy (center) and one of the basketball coaches (right).