



International Summer Research or Residency Travel Award

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As I write this, I can't help but think about my academic journey in the last couple of years and the intellectual growth that came with it. The first time I came to the United States was through the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program a couple of years ago. I remember arriving in Madison, Wisconsin, excited to learn and teach and interact with the Madison community. I hoped that what I learned through the experience would eventually impact my community back in Kenya. I have always been interested in serving my community. This was also my main reason for applying to the Ph.D. program at the Department of Education Leadership and Policy Analysis: To impact changes within my community through policymaking and research.

With the same goal in mind, I started this summer traveling back to Kenya to conduct a research study on Kenyan Alumni who graduated from higher education institutions in the United States. Part of my research interest revolves around diversity, equity and inclusion as it relates the experiences of African international students within higher education institutions in the United States. One question I was curious about was, "What happens to African international students after they graduate and return home?" My research this summer helped me explore this question as I interacted with alumni who graduated from higher education academic institutions in the United States.



Through the grant I received from the Global Engagement Office, I started my summer by traveling to Kenya. I was able to travel and conduct research interviews with alumni who graduated from the United States and were living and working in Kenya. This meant traveling to different places in the country. Findings from this research will be used to inform higher education institutions on the best way they can work with African international students moving forward.

Prior to conducting research, I had to clear up with Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the United States and National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. As I was waiting for the clearance feedback, I used the time I had to volunteer as a motivational speaker for a couple of schools around my neighborhood. I specifically had the opportunity of talking to candidates who were going to sit for their Kenya national exam. When I was not doing research, I went for a couple of traditional Somali weddings and visited family members and friends. I also went for adventures within the country that included feeding giraffes among others.

