Atlanta Blog
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Friday, October 31, 2008

7 a.m.- the day starts early in order to get ready for a long day.

9 a.m.- We were downstairs in the lobby, ready to go, at 8:30 to be at CNN by 9 a.m. When we entered the building, we were met by Lisa McClure-Guthrie who is an executive editor at CNN.

We were given a tour of the control room during the taping of “CNN Newsroom.” I stood in the exact spot where Sanjay Gupta stands when there are medical headlines and he is needed in the control room to oversee facts. On the floor, with the writers and producers, Suzanne Simons gave us a tour and introduced us to Tim Lester. He emphasized the fact-checking CNN must address to have such a polished and respected product.

In a conference room, we met with employees of CNN. It was an incredible experience. Brian Larch, a producer of various CNN long-form documentaries including “Black in America,” talked with us and described what he did and gave us advice for the future. It was fascinating to hear what he had to say about the time, effort and commitment it took to do his job. “Black in America” was a two-hour special with, according to Larch, “over 200 hours of footage.”

Although there was no sighting of Anderson Cooper, my personal hero, I fell in love with CNN and the channel’s famous work. Currently, CNN is the channel I trust to deliver international news to me. I now respect their services even more because I see the effort and commitment it takes for the channel to be as reliable as it is.

11:30 a.m. - After CNN, we went to The Weather Channel (TWC). The President and CEO of the Weather Channel, Debora Wilson, met our group in the conference room. She gave us a brief history of TWC and talked to us about her personal growth in the workplace and how she came to work at TWC. After this, Meredith Smith, VP Climate Strategic Marketing, talked to us about her professional history and one of her projects at the Weather Channel. She organizes the “Forecast Earth Summit,” which brings children from across the country to Washington, D.C. There, selected high school students learn about current environmental issues from experts and participate in a forum to share their ideas about the environment. Her main motivation for working at TWC was to “do good by doing good.” She likes that her job has a positive influence on the world. She also explained the channel’s earth-friendly studios (http://climate.weather.com/info/leed/). We were given a tour of the green studio, the environmentally friendly weather channel set.

I found this meeting helpful because we learned tips to be marketable for positions in broadcast media. This is something that school can teach us, but people in the professional world must reaffirm this.
3:00 p.m.- After TWC, we went to the Cox Broadcast Group local affiliate, WSB-TV/radio. In a conference setting, we were told about the various positions available at the station and given a tour of its massive set.

Saturday, November 1, 2008

9 a.m.- We headed to Turner Field, home of the Atlanta Braves. Jonathan Hillyard met us and gave us a tour of the control room and the high-tech facilities the editors and technical specialists use to make a Braves game a true form of entertainment. We were especially interested in Braves Vision, the 72-foot, on-field screen used to project images during the game.

At the end of the tour, Jonathan took us down to the Braves dugout and allowed us to walk on the field. We walked along the edges of the field and I felt dwarfed by the vast setting of the stadium. I’ve been to plenty of baseball games in my life, but standing on the field and looking at the stadium is a completely different feeling.

The trip was incredible. The Communications Fellows saw a new side to communication and the media. Studying from afar is much different than questioning and seeing it for yourself. Overall, I was incredibly pleased with the trip. The only qualm I had was that I was too tired to walk a straight line at the end, but the experience I had was completely worth the exhaustion. After visiting Atlanta, I want to look into working with CNN in the future.