




**STUDENT DIPLOMACY CORPS  
2018 DONOR REPORT**



Five years ago, The Student Diplomacy Corps (SDC) was simply an idea discussed by friends and educators around a kitchen table in Emmaus, PA. Today, the first SDC alumni are getting ready to graduate from college. We are so proud to hear about the achievements, goals and ambitions of these remarkable young people and thankful that their SDC experiences continue to touch and inform their lives.

This past summer, 164 students from communities across 35 US states explored the languages and cultures of 17 countries around the world. With your help, our 2018 Student Diplomats learned alongside Mexican host families, Maori activists, Italian architects, Moroccan musicians, Basque farmers and each other.

On behalf of Amelia, Tilek, Amari, Melvin, Lukas, Natalie, Zachary, Andrea (*pictured on the front of this report*) and all of our 2018 Student Diplomats, thank you for the vital role you play to support educational opportunities that help young people build confidence, develop enduring skills and prepare for college success.

In the following pages, our students pull back the curtain and share stories from their adventures abroad. You'll also meet SDC alumni and read about the long term impact of your investment as we celebrate our 5th anniversary. Your continued support inspires us to keep working hard around that kitchen table as we plan the next five years of growth at the Student Diplomacy Corps.

Our very best,



Tony Allen



Chris Frantz



John Meislin



Breeze Willis

**Experience life in the field alongside 2018 Student Diplomats as they gain independence, make new friends and immerse themselves in the beauty of cultures and languages around the world.**

*"Kia ora tatou katoa he mihi nui tenei ki a koutou..."* As the van pulled up to the marae, the laughter and jokes began to fade. We trickled onto the gravel awaiting directions. A member of the *Ngati Manu* tribe called out to us, a summoning. Although we didn't understand his words, we knew we were being welcomed to their land. The *powhiri* had begun. Warriors, performing the *haka powhiri*, began to yell. Demonstrating their skills, they came closer, eyes bulging and tongues piercing out of their mouths. The *Pukuna*. Portraying defiance. We shuffled towards the sacred courtyard. Huddled up. Anxious. When we entered the *wharenui*, dozens of eyes followed us as we approached our seats. Once the tribe finished giving their speeches and performing their songs, all heads turned towards me. Trembling, I stood up. And in *Te Reo Maori*, the language of the Maori, I gave my speech.

**Justin Desprebiteres | New York, NY | Aotearoa (New Zealand)**

*"Cual es el problema?"* said my host father. *"What's the problem?"* *"Mi zapato para futbol está roto,"* I said. *"My soccer cleat is broken."* He laughed out loud for 5 minutes straight. I fake laughed to not ruin the fun but deep inside I was still upset. *"Aqui,"* he said, while taking the broken cleat. *"Here."* I followed in curiosity because I didn't know what was happening. We entered a cabin where I was amazed by machines and tools. They were machines I had never seen before. While I was still admiring the sight of the room, my host dad called me and said, *"Mira."* *"Look"* He put on his gloves and went to work. I watched as he effortlessly fixed my cleat in under 20 minutes. For a final fix, he took one of his gloves off and cut off a large piece. He proceeded to use the piece to bind the bottom of my cleat with the top. *"Aqui"* he said, *"Bien?"* Still in shock, I replied *"Si, muchas gracias papá."* *"Yes. Thank you so much dad,"* although I still thought thank you was not enough.

**Ajay Brown | New York, NY | Chile & Easter Island**

In China, I found myself in uncomfortable situations daily. During one of our first nightly card-playing sessions, I shuffled the deck of cards, while eight eyes stared at me. No one said a word. Not wanting to make a mistake, I counted to ten in Mandarin, reciting “yi, er, san” repeatedly in my head. I grabbed a random card and placed it on the table while the eyes continued to follow. As I pointed to the cards, not knowing how to say the colors, they looked at me with a smile. Despite the language barrier, I was able to learn from my host siblings. “Lüsè” they said as they pointed to the green card. Round one began and I caught myself confusing the pronunciation between red and yellow. They laughed but continued to encourage me towards trying. After about three rounds, I became a master. Besides learning a bit of Mandarin, I also learned my capacity to take on challenges.

**Montserrat Ambrosio | Bronx, NY | China**

The first night, our group leader Jason took us out and told us he had a surprise. Of course, a group of teenagers came up with completely random guesses as to what it might be. As we walked down to the *souq*, we started to smell a kind of salty fish. As we approached a snail cart, Jason told us that this was our surprise! At first, a majority of the group seemed hesitant to try the snails. Jason was so excited though as this was one of his favorite Moroccan treats and at this point we knew we couldn't disappoint him. Jason asked for a cup of snails and broth and the man handed us all toothpicks and told us “kul!” which means eat in *Darija*. We all grabbed our toothpick and proceeded to dig into the shell of the snail and slurp it into our mouths. It was such a salty and pungent taste, something I'll never forget, and it made me believe that the next month was going to be full of surprises.

**Lily Wood | Basalt, CO | Morocco**

My immersion into Japanese culture would not have been as successful without the stay with my host family, the Watanabes. Despite the language barrier I was able to truly bond with all members of the family. We even had conversations about real life issues, like gun violence, stereotypes, and college tuition, that I couldn't even discuss with some people in English. In the Tobetsu train station I was both surprised and moved when my youngest host sibling, Oto, began to cry. It touched my heart to see that despite her young age, our short time together meant something to her just as much as it did to me. As I looked out the window of the plane to Suzuka and saw the gorgeously white tipped mountains, I realized how strongly I did not want to leave Japan.

**Joi Griffin | Atlanta, GA | Japan**

## 5 YEARS OF STUDENT DIPLOMACY | ALUMNI PROFILES

- 739 Student Diplomats from 38 US states
- 107 school and mentoring organization partners
- 17 month-long thematic programs in 18 countries world-wide
- 521 individual, institutional and corporate donors
- 45 host communities and 823 host families
- 100% of student body received scholarship support



**Marina Rivera | Philadelphia, PA**  
SDC Turkey 2015  
St. Andrew's University (Scotland) 2020  
International Relations Honours Program  
  
State Dept Intern Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,  
Yemeni Special Affairs Unit, analyst for  
the St. Andrew's Foreign Review

**Justin Amafo | Hollis, NY**  
SDC Uruguay 2014  
NYU Shanghai 2019  
Interactive Media Arts and Business

Technical Director Chinese performing  
arts Asia Tour, special film project with  
the Royal Prince of Cambodia



**Giovanna Paz | Houston, TX**  
SDC Italy 2015  
University of Pennsylvania 2020  
Communications & Latin American Studies  
  
Study abroad Argentina, Editorial Intern  
Forbes Media in NYC, applying to be  
foreign correspondent upon graduation

**Israel Moorer | Cleveland, OH**  
SDC Morocco 2014  
Oregon State University 2018  
Environmental Science

Conservationist and native plant  
restoration, works at Dream  
Harvest Farming



**Alexis De La Rosa | New York, NY**  
SDC France 2014  
Middlebury College 2019  
Theater Studies and Pre-Med

Study Abroad at Oxford University,  
Posse scholarship winner, applying  
to medical school



**Marcella Bolenbaugh | Naples, FL**  
SDC Chile 2016  
University of Florida 2021  
Biological Engineering & Spanish

Community development in Tijuana,  
Mexico, work and travel in Brazil,  
Gatorship multicultural affairs program

**Ruben Castro | Houston, TX**  
SDC France 2015  
Claremont McKenna College 2020  
International Relations & Economics

Interned in Amman, Jordan, travel  
through Western Europe, East Asia and  
the Middle East



**Alexis Tolbert | Kansas City, MO**  
SDC France 2014  
Carleton College 2020  
Psychology and Francophone Studies

Study Abroad Paris, Residence Assistant,  
Officer Black Student Alliance, Advisor  
Intercultural and International Life.

**Amari Dennis | Los Angeles, CA**  
SDC Spain 2016  
Tufts 2021  
Entrepreneurial Leadership Studies,  
Spanish Language and Drama

Global Orientation host advisor at Tufts,  
Judith Berry Griffin award for excellence

