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SHC Travel Report

During 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> February 2023, I was granted the opportunity to present my research at GeoSym23: Spatiality and Sustainability Symposium hosted by the Department of Geography & Sustainability at University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I thank the Shackouls Honors College for partially funding the travel and investing in my academic interests by also granting me the Shackouls Honors Undergraduate Research Fellowship for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

The conference had presentations and talks which spanned across the various disciplines within Geography and delegates from nearby states. On the first day, I attended oral presentations on “Weather, Networks, and Neighborhoods”, a Q&A session with UT Geography graduate students, and a lecture on “Hydroclimate Variability in the Circum-Caribbean” by Dr. Dimitris Herrera. The second day was divided in two parts, I attended a session on Cultural Symbols and Geographies and listened to 3 graduate students talk about their respective research works and dissertations. This session particularly struck to me as I could draw connections from a class I took at MSU, Political Ecology by Dr. Brian Williams in Department of Geography, in the presentations and it deepened my understanding of cultural ecology. The next session was on “Geophysical Science”. Four graduate students and one faculty member at UT, Knoxville presented in this session. A lot of the research conducted by the students and the faculty was at Costa Rica, so I learnt an awful lot about Costa Rica lake sediments, biomass estimation through Sentinel-2 Multi-Spectral Images, and 12,000-year sediment record of fire history. The presentation by the faculty- Dr. Sally Horn- was about “Exploring wetlands on eastern highland rim of Tennessee”. I found this talk intriguing and knowledgeable as wetlands fascinate me and I have always wanted to learn more about them. Dr. Horn included a lot of images from her field work experience and it was enlightening to see how samples are collected in unfavorable conditions. She also detailed how she had to go through two different federal agencies to get permission to work on the area as it is a part of Air Force base, which I found helpful as I will likely need to deal with federal agencies in future working in the Natural Sciences field.

After Dr. Horns’ presentation, the Department of Geography at UTK hosted a social lunch and provided us food and space to eat and network. The lunch was followed by the poster presentation session where I presented my research on “Identification of seafloor gas seeps in sonar data to develop a machine learning detection database”. The session seemed like a few minutes to me as I was continuously talking to some or the other person about my work. I had an opportunity to hold a conversation with Dr. Horn during my presentation and I learnt that she taught the Department Head of the Geosciences Department here at MSU- Dr. John Rodgers. She also told me to tell Dr. Rodgers that she was glad he approved me to travel and present there. I was applauded by everyone as I was the youngest presenter and the only undergraduate student who attended the whole conference among faculty and graduate students. This session was followed by another oral presentation session on “Memory Work” which pertained to the discipline of human geography. And finally, the closing lecture was by Dr. Christy Hyman who

is a faculty here at Mississippi State. She was a guest lecturer in my Political Ecology in the Fall 2022 semester so it was great to hear about her work in detail.

This conference definitely expanded my knowledge and network horizons as I met people from different states and from different sub-disciplines. Some presentations on spatial data science and imagery were directly related to my research and gave me a better understanding how different methods can be applied in the realm. It was my first time presenting to all strangers as in the past, whenever I made presentations I knew at least one person. It was a fun challenge and learning experience. I was able to discuss the opportunities and my experience at MSU with other students from UTK and University of Kentucky. Some students also told me about future opportunities at schools in North Carolina and South Carolina when I spoke to them about my interest in Coastal and Marine Science which is extremely valuable to me as I need to gather information and learn about graduate school applications.

Once again, I am grateful to the Shackouls Honors College for allowing to me present and help me grow as a student and professional.

