

*By Austin Yoakum, Spring 2020 International Trade Assistant (ITA)*

International Trade Assistant (ITA). Don't let the title fool you, the prestigious sounding title is little more than our way of presenting the interns at the U.S. Commercial Service. Nonetheless, do not be misdirected by the responsibilities, character and the determination of an International Trade Assistant. We are rarely referred to as interns by our colleagues, because when you think intern you think new, green and unexperienced. When referred to as an International Trade Assistant, you hold your head a little higher and feel more like a part of the combination of unique individuals who make the office run. The opportunities that will arise can be found nowhere else. Within my first week, the office was gearing up to host one of its larger events and it was immediately trial by fire. Between learning the protocols of an Embassy, who and where everything and everyone was, contacting people left and right and going to meetings to organize the event. I was hooked.



As an ITA, you are paid with experiences and incomparable moments that broaden one's range of how the U.S. Government works. By week three, I was shaking hands and complimenting the Secretary of State's tie, while preparing to go to my second trade show, which would see me run through most of the business cards I had brought. Networking and having excellent communication skills is vital to working as an ITA. Over the course of your term, you will have the opportunity to come across hundreds of different people from different backgrounds, industries and careers. All of which have something new to offer, which can benefit you 20 minutes after hearing it, or even 20 years down the road. But this job isn't all sunshine and roses believe me. It comes with precise data entries for client cases, market research reports that can take weeks to identify data, cold calls, and the other tasks that must be done to ensure client needs are met. But it pays off. And by the end of it, you will come away with a different point of view of not only the job, but yourself and the world along with it.

So, if you are looking for the opportunity to grow your international network, acquire valuable office experience, take on different projects every day and learn the art of how the world operates outside of College Station, becoming an International Trade Assistant (Intern) is right for you.