

## **Jessica Ram, Susquehanna University alum**

My experience with FUSE started in my senior year of college at Susquehanna University, I was the director of our FUSE Chapter so I got to manage our exec board, I got to mentor students, I like to consider the way that we planned meetings week to week as like lesson planning, because it felt very similar to when I was teaching a couple of years later, to the way that we thought about you know what would benefit our students the most and how can we create the kind of learning community that people want to return to and come back to and maintain together.

FUSE really helped with a lot of professional development for me, with working with the FUSE Conference, getting to do a panel at the FUSE Conference, getting to go to AWP that year, getting to work the AWP table, so I got a lot of experience in that kind of sector because of getting to work in FUSE and that was kind of what I got to do as director, and I really loved it while I was there.

During my senior year at Susquehanna, I tried applying to grad schools, and then kind of gave up halfway through the application process because I decided I didn't want to do it right away after graduating, so I said I would wait, I would apply to jobs, so that's kind of what I did, I took a year off. I got a job offer to work with a textbook publisher in New York but they weren't offering a very good salary, so I did turn that down and I ended up taking a very obscure little job in France for a couple of months. And I mentioned that only to say that while I was in France doing this job, I came to the realization that I wanted to go to grad school.

So I started putting my applications together, I applied to six programs, and I got into four. I applied to the University of North Carolina Wilmington, specifically because of their teaching program. They had a graduate teaching assistantship which was a separate application, I had to write a second essay for that when I was applying to their program. And I ended up getting that funding which covered, my whole first year was tuition remission, so I didn't have to pay for tuition for the first year, and then I got an in-state tuition rate for my second and third year in the program, so I only had to pay I want to say less than \$6,000 for each year that I was there, which was really lovely. And I got a \$17,000 a year stipend that I got to work, which meant I didn't really have to work a second job while I was teaching and going to grad school, which was really lovely.

It was a three year program, I got to take out of genre classes which was really lovely. I was a poetry major so I took a lot of poetry classes, but I also got to take nonfiction, we got to take a pedagogy class, which is a really big thing. Part of the teaching program was I got to teach from the minute I got there, so I was teaching full

classes from my first semester, which was a really lovely and a really great experience. So by the time I was in my third year, I was teaching two full courses that I had designed of my own volition, which was really great.

I was the GSA Rep. while I was in grad school, which was the Graduate Student Association, so I got to help with creating a mentorship program and getting to just kind of be a resource. I like to be involved in things, I think FUSE kind of kicked that into me, so I continued it when I was in grad school. And then in my third year I started applying to teaching positions and to fellowships, I applied to the fellowship I currently have, which is the Stadler Fellowship in literary arts administration, in December. I got an email from them getting a finalist position in January. I had an interview like the week later, and then they offered me the job within a week from that interview, which was a really, is a very quick process, which was a little jarring for me, but really lovely all the same time to just kind of have my future a little more solidified that early on in my third year of the program.

But FUSE came up a lot during my application process. I wrote about FUSE in a lot of my cover letters, and a lot of my job applications, during the interview for this fellowship that I'm currently doing, I talked about FUSE for a good chunk of our interview. Just because of the leadership skills that I kind of built from being a part of this club and getting to be involved with.

So the fellowship that I'm doing, again it's a literary arts administration, so basically the gist of that is, I work with the Stadler Center, I get to help with event planning, I get to help with community engagement, I get to run all of the social media for the center and for our literary magazine, West Branch, which is really fun. Arts administration is kind of an umbrella blanket term for a lot of different things. So like the other day I got to help pick out furniture because we got a grant to refurbish the library, and that just like falls under my jurisdiction, which is great. In May we have a group of 150 sixth graders that are coming and want to hang out with us, so I get to plan that as well. So I get to kind of put my hands in a little bit everywhere, and I think being a part of FUSE really helped me be able to kind of take on anything that kind of came my way. Which made me feel really confident in taking a job like this, and getting to work in a very community-centric environment, because FUSE for me was always very centered on community.

And I think that kind of transferred over as I moved throughout grad school and then as I moved into this fellowship, and even as I'm applying to jobs for next year, I'm still mentioning FUSE in my cover letters, so it's one of those things that I think people

see on a CV and they're very curious about what that title means, and what is the Forum for Undergraduate Student Editors. So it brings a lot of questions, which I think is great. But yeah, that's the gist of my little journey, thank you so much.