

PRINCETON IN AFRICA

Fellow Report: 6-month

This report focuses on the details of your fellowship that have changed and evolved since your 3-month report; it also aims to help you begin formulating greater reflections about your fellowship experience. To complete this report, you may find it helpful to have a copy of your 3-month report form nearby.

We will use your comments to assess partner organizations, site placements, stipends, and overall logistics. The information you include may be shared with the Board of Directors and future Fellows. We may use your comments to give feedback to partner organizations as well. Please indicate when information is not to be shared outside of PiAf and rest assured that we will honor your request.

Feel free to attach relevant anecdotes, emails, or photos to supplement the required responses.

Deadlines for this report are as follows:

If you began your fellowship in	Your report is due
June	January 15
July	January 31
August	February 28
September	March 31
October	April 30

Please complete this report in Microsoft Word and email it back to piaf@princeton.edu. Confirmation will be sent to you upon receipt.

Your Personal Information

Organization: Student Sponsorship Programme
City, Country: Johannesburg, South Africa

Anticipated fellowship end date:

1. How have you been dealing with money during the course of your Fellowship? Have you opened a bank account? Are you using traveler's checks? Relying on ATMs? Any advice on money/banking issues to share with future Fellows?

I have opened a bank account through FNB and also have cell phone banking which makes purchasing airtime for phone calls for example easier. Banks require that you have a study visa or a work permit to open up a bank account and many will not allow you to open up one with a visitor's visa.

2. Are you taking or have you taken anti-malarials during your fellowship? If so, what kind and how/where did you acquire them?

No.

Your Work

3. Have your responsibilities evolved or changed since the start of your fellowship? If so, how? Because the organization's definition of leadership has shifted to a focus on academic excellence, I have struggled to redefine leadership and create programs that are relevant and implementable. I've continued to assist in a variety of projects with SSP newsletter publications and graduation ceremony preparation.

4. Please describe in greater detail 1-2 projects that you have undertaken or accomplishments you have made in the last 3 months. (Feel free to update us on a project you have been working on since the beginning of your fellowship or to share information about a new project.)

- A) SSP E-Newsletter Editor – I’ve essentially assumed this role because of my strong writing and editing skills. I’ve written articles for the September and December Editions of 2011 and also interviewed a corporate sponsor (Thebe Investments) and placed the interview Q &A on the website as well as other stakeholders such as partner schools.
- B) Graduation Ceremony preparation – SSP scholars matriculated this year and there was a lot of preparation that went into the annual prize giving and award ceremony. I assisted the Graduate Programme Officer by contacting matriculants, inputs on trophy purchases, editing of programme, compiling of testimonials for the SSP 2012 Desk Calendar, photography, etc.

Your Fellowship in the Future

5. Would you recommend that this fellowship position be repeated again in the future? If so, what about your post might be improved upon by/for future Fellows?

Yes, I would recommend that this fellowship position be repeated again in the future. To improve this post, in addition to being assigned with work responsibilities, allowing the fellow to have more responsibility and input in areas of interest. Also, have more structured seminars on education in South Africa – visits to the Department of Education, etc – getting to know more about the educational policy of South Africa through field trips and more structured visits to partner schools.

6. What would you tell someone who is interested in being the next PiAf Fellow at your post?

Working at SSP requires a lot of self-initiative, “marketing” of your skills and the ability to work independently. It also requires a positive attitude, emotional intelligence, and the ability to be a team player and build strong working and personal relationships with your colleagues.

Your Reflections

7. Since the beginning of your fellowship, have you returned home (i.e., for the December/January holidays)? If so, how did leaving your posting in Africa affect you and your work?

I returned home for two weeks for the holidays. Leaving Africa confirmed that I certainly want to remain in Johannesburg following the fellowship. Coming back was an adjustment though. I had similar feelings to when I first arrived in July. I had to readjust back to the hustle and bustle of life here and relearn how to be comfortable with living alone again. It has been a bit difficult; slowly but surely, things are falling back into place again.

8. What will you do differently in the next 6 months until the conclusion of your fellowship-- at work? Outside of work?

In the remaining 6 months, I will try to have more of a work-leisure balance. I will experience Joburg night life more. Invest in people and relationships that are mutually beneficial and with people who sincerely care about me. Appreciate my alone time and be more proactive about achieving personal and professional goals.

9. After 6 months in the field, what have you learned about Africa, development, and living abroad? What issues do you want to learn more about during the remainder of your fellowship experience?

After 6 months in Africa I think the quote by Margaret Mead sums it up best: “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Passion alone is not enough. It also requires dedication, perseverance and determination. The ability to adapt to change and not be resistant to things being done differently is also important. I have also recognized the importance of surrounding myself with positive people and influences who think creatively about making the organization provide the best services to our stakeholders.

For Africa to move forward, it requires dedicated and ethical leadership. Education is also critical, skills retention (many leave hence the tremendous brain drain and loss of highly skilled labor) and a cut down on corruption – more transparency and accountability in government.

10. How have the first 6 months of your fellowship shaped your plans for the future?

Well, I always knew that I was fond of South Africa, but I have grown particularly fond of Johannesburg. I can certainly see myself on the continent long term.

I met the Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy at the Rosa Parks Library in Soweto. It was great to see her building the diplomatic partnership between the US and SA. She also went to Georgetown – the School of Foreign Service. Speaking with her and others from the US Consulate is making me consider taking the Foreign Service exam.

11. It is often helpful for us to draw from PiAf Fellows' words when we disseminate information about PiAf. However, we hate to hassle you whenever we need a blurb! So, please tell us a bit here about what PiAf means to you. Your insights and anecdotes give interested supporters a glimpse into the scope of your projects and potential to make a difference in one year. Please write a few paragraphs as if you were being asked to comment on PiAf for a promotional brochure. What would you say to a potential supporter? An interested applicant? An employer? A friend? What does PiAf mean to you? What have you gained or learned from this experience?

Princeton in Africa is an unparalleled opportunity that allows recent US college graduates and young alumni who are genuinely passionate about Africa to work on the continent for one year. Even though I am confident that I have learned a tremendous amount during my time here in South Africa, I know that time will prove that this year long fellowship was one of the most defining moments of my career and life. It's hard to see the full picture now, but I know without a doubt that this opportunity is life-changing.

Princeton in Africa attempts to chip away at the doubt that a small number of committed citizens can truly change the world. For the fellows, PiAf has altered our attitudes and/or nuanced our understanding of the continent to a point that our experiences will continue to inform others after the fellowship about the necessity and value of partnering with the continent for its advancement.

Princeton in Africa is truly a blessing. After studying abroad in UCT in my junior year, I knew definitively that I wanted to return to South Africa after I graduated. I graduated from college in May and moved to South Africa in July. There is no place that I'd rather be at the moment and it is truly a privilege that my desires to return to the continent were fulfilled by this opportunity.