

“Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society’s margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.”

-Kofi Annan

Secretary-General of the United Nations

January 26, 2024, while I was in Maui working on a large topographic survey, I received an email from the FIG Foundation. I knew this email contained the news I had been waiting for, I remember my heart racing before I opened it, having settled in my mind that there was no way I was going to be a recipient of the grant I applied for. The excitement that I felt as I read the word **“congratulations”** in bold print, is a feeling I will never forget.

Preparing to travel internationally for the first time was an experience in and of itself. Passport, visa, adapters, yellow fever vaccination, etc.... each step that I completed created more and more excitement about the event to come!

Traveling to Ghana was long but enjoyable. Once on my direct flight to Accra I got my first taste of Ghanaian hospitality and kindness. So many of the travelers on that flight were on their way home and were more than happy to give me ideas on things to see and foods to eat. The passengers I sat next to made me feel at home.

Upon arrival at Kotoka International Airport, I saw a sign that said “Akwaaba” which means welcome. I got to experience the hustle and bustle of the airport, exchange some currency, and get into a local cab to be ushered off to the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, for a week I will NEVER forget.



Saturday morning started off strong with the beginning of our Young Surveyors pre-event to the FIG working week. This couldn't have been a better way to start the conference. I was able to connect with young surveyors from across the globe, and not only that, but *mentors* from across the globe as well. The relationships I was able to develop over the young surveyor's event are invaluable to me both personally and professionally. I was able to give a brief presentation on how I got here, it was humbling to present alongside other professionals whom I look up to and admire so much. I was also introduced to all the commission chairs, which helped me immensely throughout the rest of the working week itself.



Sunday, the final day of the young surveyor's pre-event, a group of young surveyors participated in a round table discussion and talked about several topics including outreach, and various ways to improve FIG YSN. I very much enjoyed hearing such diverse perspectives.

Beyond the more formal parts of the YSN event, we were given some absolutely incredible opportunities to go out into Accra and experience the culture, food, and people. Leica hosted an incredible dinner event with

traditional music and dancing. I will never forget being escorted onto the dance floor and being taught some of the local moves!

Once the FIG working week itself began, I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of sessions I had the opportunity to attend. The span of subjects and topics that were covered was incredible.

I also want to make it a point to say that FIG and the FIG Foundation really emphasized the importance of the Young Surveyors, and truly made myself, and the other grant recipients feel not only welcomed, but like we truly belonged in the group, that we have something valuable to contribute. This was a major highlight of the entire experience for me.

Seeing all of the work being done in various regions and countries was eye opening. This experience truly gave me a new perspective of the geospatial world and all that it offers. So much important work is being done all the time.

I was able to connect with commission two, I was brought into the fold with open arms and have begun working alongside other group members since being home. I find this work valuable and fulfilling in a way I never expected!

While in Accra, I was able to visit the Osu Castle (Also known as the Freedom Arch) the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum and Memorial Park where I learned how influential the nations first president truly was. I was honored to attend a Ghanaian evening, held just outside of his resting place where there was traditional food and dancing. A night to remember.

The FIG Foundation grant also provided me with a ticket to a Gala, hosted by FIG. Everyone dressed their best and went out into town to enjoy a catered meal, fellowship, dancing, and more. I could go on for many pages expressing the fun I had and the education I received while in Accra.



I did my best to pack as much into my time in Ghana as I could, and I still wish I could have done more! I am forever grateful to the FIG Foundation for the opportunity to see and experience a place I may have otherwise never traveled to. Meeting surveyors from across the world gave me even more motivation and encouragement to continue on my path, continue my education, and continue making my participation in FIG a priority in my career.

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