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Student Spotlight

Political Science Student Attends USAFA Conference

Since 1959, the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs has hosted a symposium for qualified undergraduate students from around the country to engage in debate on current national and international issues. Ben Horblit, sophomore political science, philosophy and public policy major, was selected to attend this year's conference held October 18-21, 2011.

"DU has the opportunity to send two students every year to the conference," said Peter Hanson, assistant professor in political science. "I nominated Ben because he's perhaps one of the most impressive students I've seen at DU. He can quickly grasp a difficult argument, understand it, and criticize it from different angles. His writing is insightful and cuts to the core of an issue. The Air Force Academy conference requires students to be quick on their feet intellectually and persuasive speakers, and those are the qualities Ben consistently shows."

This year's topic was *Power and Influence: Global Dynamics in the 21st Century*. Horblit participated in roundtable discussions moderated by senior representatives from academia and government. Distinguished speakers, including Christopher Hill, dean of DU's Josef Korbel School of International Studies, provided expert perspective and information.

In addition to the roundtable, Horblit participated in the International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise (ISCNE) run by the Army War College on Oct. 17-18. During this exercise he acted as a member of a mock Russian delegation to attempt to negotiate a peaceful solution to a border conflict in the Southern Caucasus.

"I learned a lot about how UN-sponsored negotiations work," Horblit said of the symposium. "I also learned a lot about the military's approach to their own role as a foreign policy actor and how they seek to reach out to civilians in the foreign policy field." His classes at DU, he added, have helped him understand foreign policy "holistically."

"The classes I've taken here, particularly Professor Hanson's American foreign policy class, have helped me understand the theory and structure of international relations, as well as the practical considerations that inform foreign policy decisions," he said.

Horblit plans to graduate in the spring of 2014. Although life after graduation seems distant, he is leaning heavily toward graduate school and a possible future in the academic side of political science.

"Students like Ben show the deep pool of talent we have in our student body at DU and I was delighted to have him represent the university at the conference," said Hanson. "He has plans to go to graduate school and I can see him being an outstanding scholar."

