

## CAREER THE TURTLE

...because **SUCCESS** starts here.



### Abraham Sidibe '16

**Title:** Community Economic Development Agent

**Employer:** Peace Corps

**Major:** Economics, BA

[LinkedIn](#)

### What do you enjoy most about your current position?

I enjoy the freedom to plan and execute my projects with the full support and close guidance of my supervisor. The structured but comfortable management style allows for freedom to plan projects with whomever I want. This management style allows for a bottom-up approach to development. In a developing country such as Senegal, the ability for volunteers to write grants for our projects funded by Peace Corps gives us the credibility and reinforcement that is necessary in development work.

### What is a typical day like?

The work varies a lot depending on how long I have been in service, due to language capability, finding my work niche, and receiving financing from Peace Corps for my projects. For example, here is my timeline for an entrepreneurship camp I lead for 70 participants. I spend a couple hours per day working on the following.

- Week 1: Meet with counterparts from different neighborhoods to plan the training project.
- Week 2: Write a grant through Peace Corps.
- Week 3: Receive and incorporate feedback into grant.
- A couple weeks later, once funding has been approved;
- Week 5: Conduct needs analyses with my counterparts for each participant group to decide entrepreneurship/ business management needs for training.
- Week 6: Receive financing and finalize lesson plans with a local teaching assistant.
- Week 7-TBD: Conduct trainings, celebrate, and close grant.

### Which undergraduate experiences did you find most helpful in preparing you for this position?

- 400-level courses that I took such as Cost-Benefit-Analysis and also Anti-Trust and Regulation were good courses because they pushed me to do a lot of research into subjects I had no knowledge of, and they covered very deep subjects that required a lot of attention.
- Courses that were technical and policy-focused were also useful, such as agricultural economics and urban economics. Urban economics covered how cities formed throughout history, and what is necessary in a city economy to encourage growth and development. These classes were educational, and the suggested books to read were wonderful.
- All classes though in the Economics department were technically formative and essential for an economics major. I am very satisfied and fulfilled with my education at the University of Maryland, Economics Department.

### How has your coursework helped you in your current position?

In my current work, there is the analysis side - economic analysis (econometrics) and that can be useful in any job in any sector. There is also the side of development where you need administrative and soft skills.

*Here is a list of some soft-skills I use today that I acquired from my education in the Economics department at UMD:*

- Hard-work in a structured and unstructured environment
- Empathy
- Collaboration
- Effective teamwork strategies
- Time-management

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## Skills in demand:

- I hear Salesforce is the new customer relations management software that large companies are using. Being familiar with it could be helpful because I've seen some organizations ask for it.
- Speaking multiple languages in the development field is crucial!

## Job/internship advice:

They say experience is the key to getting a job, and it is key to being able to write things on your resume; But soft skills, for a student, are also important and so is writing an effective and true resume and cover letter. The staff at UMD was so helpful and knowledgeable!

## Final advice:

It is important to practice a lot for interviews. I practiced for my Peace Corps interview with a returned Peace Corps volunteer, and it helped me tremendously. I found it less stressful and I had my talking points and multiple examples for potential questions the interviewer had for me. It paid off.

Economics majors have so many different career path options. I think there is the econometrics route – your skills will be desired by many organizations and agencies internationally and nationally. Then there is grassroots work. Then there is administrative work in between the two. Start exploring now.

Know what goal or direction you have in life. Allow yourself to be vulnerable with yourself. Once you pick a goal, start learning all you can in that field, and the road should be narrower and clearer from there.