Thursday, April 3

I started my trip to Evanston, IL by flying from Kansas City International Airport to Chicago O’Hare International Airport. I took the ‘L’ train from the airport to Evanston. The conference opened with registration and a keynote speech Thursday evening. The opening keynote was by Ed Cardoza, a representative from Partners in Health. The topic of the speech was solidarity in global health, the theme of this year’s summit. Solidarity is based on respecting the dignity of others and connecting people across the world to work together to promote health care. A common message from all the speakers during the conference consistently referred to the importance of making sustainable change through life-long partnerships by understanding and respecting members of the communities we seek to help. Once the speech was over, we spent time getting to know other students who traveled from other parts of the country to attend the conference by eating dinner together in Evanston.

Friday, April 4

I shared a room with two girls from Truman State. Our chapter at the medical school is planning to work with Truman State on a project in the Dominican Republic to establish a birthing center. It was great to meet students from another school to understand what projects they are involved in and to get inspiration and ideas for our own project.

Friday morning started with breakfast at the McCormick Tribune Center on Northwestern’s campus. There I was able to talk to more students from other schools. I was surprised to find that UMKC’s chapter was the only medical school present. There were many students majoring in different fields such as engineering, sociology and anthropology. The first event of the morning was an interactive panel consisting of Jennifer Mitrenga from Opportunity International. Muadi Mukenge from Global Fund for Women and Catharine Quinn from Concern America.

Opportunity International is an organization based on microfinance and helps developing countries establish banking services and provides loans and savings accounts. This has made a major difference to many entrepreneurial people in the developing world and has given them the opportunity to help them help themselves. Global Fund for Women supports local efforts by working on proposals made by the community regarding problems they believe are most important. For example, in Nigeria, the community needed funds to support a project called Dreamboat Foundation. This program puts on theater productions with healthcare messages geared toward young people (i.e. safe-sex, teen pregnancy, hygiene, etc). Concern America is an organization that adopts volunteers to work in a community. The projects are designed to be
self-sustaining by the local community so that the effects can be carried out long-term. They achieve this goal by adopting a volunteer to spend about 2 years training and working with people in the community to teach skills necessary to carry out a job. Examples of their projects include volunteers who train locals how to be nurses and midwives.

The speaker following lunch was Neeraj Mistry, Vice President of Knowledge Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. He reviewed the efforts of the organization he works for and also provided basic information about the business case and how to create effective projects. Next, we went to student-led roundtable discussions. We were randomly assigned to groups with students from different schools. My group discussed the paradox of humanitarian aid in the context of global health. Prior to our discussion, I had never thought about the way global aid takes sides in disputes and whether this is ethical or not. The idea of helping others seems so simple and I enjoyed thinking critically about what strategies and perspectives are important to keep in mind when working with countries in conflict.

Each school’s chapter was assigned a chapter challenge to brainstorm a fundraising idea over dinner. This provided a way for the students in our chapter to get to know each other better and to work together on a project. We came up with an idea to promote global awareness of resources by asking car dealerships to offer customers discounts on hybrid vehicles in the amount of their donation to GlobeMed. The day closed with a speech by Julian Atim, who spoke about the student’s role in Global Health. As someone who was born in a developing country, she was able to provide an insider’s perspective on how students are received and how we can make the biggest impact.

Saturday, April 5

Saturday’s focus was on individual chapters and the focus of GlobeMed as a national organization. I attended a team breakout session on mobilizing resources and innovating for fundraising. This was particularly important for me as a co-director of treasury for our chapter. I was able to discuss fundraising ideas with students from other chapters who were particularly successful. This was also the time when our chapter was able to present the fundraising idea we had brain-stormed during the chapter challenge the night before. Our chapter’s idea was selected to be one of the top three! There were two workshops following lunch. I attended workshops on social entrepreneurship for global health and making an impact: career paths in global health. After attending the summit, listening to the speakers and meeting students who had similar interests as me, I have decided that focusing on making a difference in global health is something that I am very interested in doing in the future.

The summit ended with a Benefit Dinner, which show-cased projects that chapters have been involved in. The public was also invited to attend the dinner and I was happy to see that there are so many people outside the medical community who share an interest in global health.