

## Reflections from Michael Soto about the MANRRS trip to Birmingham, Alabama.

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 I was blessed with the opportunity to attend the MANRRS conference in Birmingham, Alabama for five days. After learning how educating and exciting previous USDA FATE trips were, I sought admission to the conference. I applied to gain a beneficial experience towards my career and strengthen my relationship and build stronger connections with my fellow USDA FATE scholars.

Before arrival at the conference I was expecting to learn about potential job opportunities and a variety of careers available for me through my interests. In reality, I learned so much more than that. I learned that obtaining the job of your dreams isn't easy. You must network with agencies and show them that through your abilities in leadership, communication and education that you are right for the position. Overall, this experience hasn't changed my career goals reciprocally, but evolved my thoughts of what career I'm available in obtaining.

Being a participant of the USDA FATE scholarship program has given me the educational tools, advice and opportunities definitely enabling me to pursue a higher education. People who have been in my shoes before have given me the proper advice about dealing with stress and pressure. With their educational connections they have given us FATE students a chance to network with USDA agencies and opportunities to accomplish internships across the nation.

Attending the MANRRS conference, I was blessed with many opportunities such as gaining a stronger relationship with my colleagues. Before arrival at Birmingham, Alabama I had no clue what these people were like and how we would bond. With time, we were all able to express similarities in careers and become great friends. That being said, what I liked best out of the entire experience was building a wonderful relationship with other USDA FATE MANRRS members and strengthening our educational paths through the workshops we attended together. I would tell any other USDA FATE scholars that attending this conference was a beneficial experience that I would most certainly do again and suggest they do it too. I would also tell them that this trip provided me with plenty of opportunities to seek internships, networking occasions and build great memories.

Overall, my fondest memory of attending Birmingham, Alabama and the 2014 MANRRS conference was expressing professional leadership with the other USDA FATE MANRRS members. Before this trip I wouldn't even bother getting my name out there or expressing leadership. At the beginning, I just saw my fellow USDA FATE scholars as random people. At the end of this trip, we mastered each other's names and interests. We began to discuss future actions such as social gatherings and other great activities we could all do together. I will remember my experience from the 2014 MANRRS conference for the rest of my life.



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