

## Thanvee Paga, IA – 2025

If I've learnt anything from the United States Senate Program (USSYP), it's that we must be expeditious. USSYP was a plethora of experiences—paradise, exhaustion, and always a feeling of belonging. Consisting of a variety of speakers, mentors, and delegates there was so much passion and drive it was impossible not to be inspired. Yet, beyond all the inspirational words and moments, the most compelling force was the dedication that permeated every interaction.

But let me clarify. It wasn't simply dedication to one's job—it was the dedication to a vision, a purpose, a *direction*.

During the week of USSYP, my own direction was one of growth. To consume the hundreds of varying perspectives surrounding me. While visiting Mount Vernon, the National Portrait Gallery, NASA, Capitol Hill, The US Institute of Peace, the White House, and the Supreme Court were highlights of my life. It is these four phrases from USSYP I will allow to shape my life.

1. The 3 ingredients to impact are
  - a. Make Bold Ethical Decisions
  - b. Think Big
  - c. Commit to serve
2. Fixate on the direction, not the job.
3. Seek a viewpoint beyond the current viewpoint you exist within.
4. Be prepared.

These phrases, though simple in their language, carry a weight far beyond their words. It is not merely the surface meanings that are significant—it is the way they challenge us, call us to rise above mediocrity, and inspire us to become something more. They speak to a dedication not just to the task at hand, but to the ideals that fuel true impact, to live a life of purpose.

In fact, it is this very dedication that I witnessed firsthand during the program. One could see it reflected in every person involved—the speakers, the mentors, the delegates, and even in the quiet moments when no one was speaking at all. Mrs. Rayne Guildford, the USSYP Program Director, exemplified this dedication with every fiber of her being. She had devoted years not merely to her job, but to ensuring that each delegate would leave with an experience that would empower, enlighten, and embolden them. Her creation of an environment that nurtured growth was a testament to the results produced by dedication.

Then there were the Military Mentors. Their dedication went beyond their uniforms; it was a commitment to shaping the leaders of tomorrow. With every word of advice, every shared story, they invested in the future of this country, planting seeds of leadership and resilience within us.

But perhaps most inspiring were the delegates themselves. Each one was a living embodiment of dedication—not just to their own ambitions, but to something greater. Watching each one commit themselves to welcome each experience the week had to offer is a testament to their dedication to impact. From engaging speakers by asking questions, standing for two hours to meet their state's U.S. Senators, and participating in the caucus system Isaac and I had chosen to create the KeyNote speaker elections, each delegate dedicated themselves to creating the most from this opportunity.

USSYP is not a mere memory—it is the foundation of my future. The true awards granted by USSYP are not the multitude of once-in-a-life-time opportunities, but the once-in-a-life-time perspectives and personalities you will have the privilege of interacting with. If it is your goal to make a lasting impact, find your direction and be dedicated.