

## **Summer Research Opportunities (SRO) Summary**

**Student Name:** Bianca Kim

**Year:** Class of 2015

**Project title:** (When) Do Firms Have Social Capital?

**Professor worked with:** Professor Olav Sorenson

### **Brief description of project:**

Professor Sorenson's project was geared toward the review article to be published July 2013. The project investigated the informal ties between firms—the social capital created from interactions between firms' employees separate from formal ties such as strategic alliances and contracts. The project aimed to establish a comprehensive overview of research on how managers could apply this social capital for firm development.

Due to the multidisciplinary aspect of the project (involving economics, sociology, and management science), one of the challenges this project presented was consolidating all the empirical research into a unified database. Because different fields use different terminology and research methodology, it was important to standardize all research relating to employee interactions. To this end, I had to search through several databases and journals to compile an extensive list of articles relevant to the topic. Once a preliminary list of research articles was created, I had the task of reading through the actual research and summarizing findings. I created a spreadsheet to classify the research articles by type of relationship (e.g., buyer-supplier), level of relationship (e.g., firm-firm, individual-individual), and dependent variables. It was fascinating to see how researchers strived to quantify social capital, most often in terms of "innovation."

### **What student learned & opinion of SRO experience:**

This research opportunity has taught me exactly how economic research should be carried out. I was able to gain much insight into the methodical process of research and developed the skill to efficiently read and understand empirical research articles. I have become more literate in economics, and working as research assistant has shown me what good research writing requires. This project also provided an opportunity for me to learn much about economic sociology, and the different methods researchers use to quantify abstract concepts such as social capital and effectiveness.

I have truly enjoyed my SRO experience, especially because my interests span many fields and Professor Sorenson's project was interdisciplinary. It was a very enlightening opportunity, in terms of both academics and personal growth. SRO is an especially great program for those considering graduate school and/or academia, since students work closely with professors and experience the life of economics research. I also thought all the SRO projects were very encompassing since they covered several different contemporary issues in economics.