In the fall of 2015, I had the privilege of interning in the Disability Rights Section within the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice. The Disability Rights Section is responsible for enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act along with other laws that protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. During my time at the Department of Justice, I worked on diverse projects that covered a wide variety of issues. The breadth of my work allowed me to see some of the different ways discrimination can impact people’s lives. I was impressed with how courteous and respectful everyone was when dealing with such challenging cases. I enjoyed working alongside people who were dedicated to improving opportunities for people with disabilities. It was very rewarding to see the accomplishments made by the Disability Rights Section over the course of just a few months.

In addition to my internship, I took courses on the Supreme Court and lobbying. Living just a short distance from the Supreme Court and near the heart of lobbying activity provided the perfect setting for studying these topics. I attended lectures by three sitting Supreme Court Justices and visited many different sites including the Supreme Court, the Capitol, and the White House. I had never been to Washington, D.C. before, so these were truly memorable experiences.

It was incredible living in the University of California building with other students who were interning in Washington. Everyone was busy working on issues they were truly passionate about. I enjoyed spending time with a group of individuals who were enthusiastic about creating change and who were not afraid to discuss challenging social issues. From class debates on
contentious Supreme Court cases to friendly conversations about politics, there was always an opportunity to join lively discussions.

Through their engagement and dedication, both the students in the UCDC program and my coworkers represented the values of the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement. I am glad that I was able to spend a semester in Washington among such incredible individuals. Studying and working in Washington, D.C. was an amazing experience that exceeded my expectations. I am extremely grateful for the support I received from the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement while I was in Washington, D.C.