UCDC Scholar Experience

The experience of studying and interning in Washington, D.C., as a Berkeley student in the UCDC program was a great educational, personal growth, and career development opportunity. I interned for C-SPAN, the non-profit television network that brings “gavel to gavel coverage” of the House and Senate, straight to the public without any partisan spin. C-SPAN’s mission to bring accurate political information to the public is aligned with the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement’s mission of empowering the public to enter the political process. While interning, I attended two classes which applied towards my political science major. In addition, Washington was an inspiring place to live, and sightseeing was quite entertaining. Overall, the experience was enlightening, and I feel honored to have been part of the program.

My role at C-SPAN could not have been a better fit for developing my personal and career goals. I was a “Web Producer” and was given almost all of the same responsibilities as the other online editorial staff members. On a daily basis, I was writing and editing news copy to describe political events for which video content would be displayed on the homepage for viewers around the world. In writing copy, the editorial staff would prioritize informational points that were of interest to viewers and try to inspire the public audience to become more politically informed and democratically engaged. I selected and edited photos to be used in promotion of video content on the site, gaining practical skills in Photoshop and the in-house media management system. Furthermore, it was critically important that I have an opportunity to learn about the business development process that keeps the C-SPAN website running. My
superiors gave me projects to analyze the prospects of potential business partners, report on the impact of social media marketing campaigns, and develop proposals for streamlining day-to-day processes for the Digital Services/New Media department. My ultimate career goal is to develop my own website sharing the overall mission of C-SPAN, which is to provide a resource for better nonpartisan public access to political information. My experience there gives me credibility in making business propositions in this particular field and has educated me on the finer details of running a website, while teaching me a broader perspective on creating and leading an online project to success. I was also able to successfully network, and my superiors strongly encouraged me to apply for a Web Producer position because one of their staff retired. I declined the opportunity because I felt the need to prioritize family obligations in California. However, I have made strong connections there, and it is highly likely that once I have a thoroughly developed business proposal, I will be contacting my former superiors in the New Media department with a partnership offering. My business proposal will be for a website which facilitates public involvement in online political deliberation thereby enhancing civility and democratic engagement.

The classes I attended were of high caliber and suitable for Political Science seniors or people of completely different majors. The Lobbying, Money, and Influence in Washington class really helped me gain perspective on a critical part of the policy-making process, and my research seminar on the Presidency was an amazing experience to meet people in critical parts of our government such as presidential speech writers for Bush and Obama, or top agency officials in the Pentagon or Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Having the opportunity to see the President speak live, visit memorials, enter the Capitol Building, and the tour White House was really exciting. I was able to visit the White House on
two occasions, and I worked one block away from the Capitol. Spending time in Washington confirmed my belief that the vast majority of people working on public policy in our nation’s capital are not as evil or misguided as many would suggest. Most are hardworking, democratically engaged, and truly caring for the public good. Gaining this insight about policy leaders inspires me not to give up in the face of political adversity.