

Rigoberto Chavez. Fall 2014 UCDC

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This fall, I had the terrific opportunity of interning at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), specifically within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in Washington, D.C. As the name suggests, the office's primary objective is to provide Federal agencies with "concrete strategies and best practices to recruit, hire, include, develop, retain, engage and motivate a diverse, results-oriented, high-performing workforce." Upon my first day of work, I was immediately exposed to a vast array of information in regard to how the office conducts its daily operations and was welcomed with open arms by everyone. The degree of passion, dedication and professionalism that my coworkers brought to work on a regular basis was contagious and motivated me to do the same.

At work, I was granted what I consider to be the perfect balance between formal guidance and relative autonomy for executing projects and the directions I took. By working with a team of talented people, I was exposed to various areas including policy and data analysis as well as training development. Specific projects included working on: creating a community of best practice to facilitate collaboration between federal agencies and professional organizations for outreach and recruitment purposes; developing training material based on The New IQ (Inclusive Quotient) including an e-book and a mobile app to be used government-wide; and researching best practices that promote inclusion within the workforce and briefing my supervisors verbally and via memos. One of the highlights of my experience was participating in a talk with Director Archuleta as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. I sincerely appreciated her openness in discussing features of her personal life, and I was inspired by the fact that she is the first Latina to head this federal agency.

Within my office, I saw a reflection of the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement's commitment to "engag[ing] people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints in the resolution of public policy issues." This was apparent both in terms of descriptive characteristics (White, Asian, Hispanic, and African American) and backgrounds (a former lawyer, psychologist, engineer, and military officer). Outside of work, the topics of civility and democratic engagement were well pronounced thanks to UCDC Monday Night Forum's guest speakers, including the current president of Rock the Vote, Ashley Spillane, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and former U.S. Representative and current President of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Jane Harman.

All in all, despite being enrolled in academic courses, preparing for law school and working full-time, I thoroughly enjoyed my time in D.C. and am really glad to have embarked on this journey. An internship with OPM has led me to consider the possibility of a career with the federal government, a path that I had previously overlooked. I am thankful to the members of the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for helping to make this opportunity possible and contributing to my professional development.