



Interning at the Capital

Each year, about seventy-five UC San Diego students travel to Washington, DC to spend a quarter living and learning in the nation's capital through the University of California Washington, DC Center (UCDC) program. The Teaching + Learning Commons has engaged students from more than 25 majors in UCDC over the past five years, reaching students from STEM and Arts & Humanities in addition to Social Science fields like Political Science, International Studies, and Economics, preparing students across disciplines for lives and careers as civically engaged leaders.

Students in the UCDC Program engage with a wide range of social and political issues and have a front-row seat to witness the national political process firsthand. They participate in intensive internships with organizations that range from congressional offices and government agencies to non-profit and non-governmental organizations, think tanks, media outlets, and arts and cultural institutions. While living in the University of California's 11-story building located six blocks from the White House, students in the academic year program participate in research seminars and optional electives that facilitate scholarly engagement with their internships and their Washington, DC environs.

In advance of students' departure, the Academic Internship Program staff at the Teaching + Learning Commons engages and prepares students through outreach, pre-departure workshops, individual advising, and a Peer Advisor program connecting students with past participants who serve as models and mentors. AIP collaborates with UC Washington Center staff and counterparts at eight other University of California campuses to create a system of support for students both on campus and in Washington, DC.

The perspective gained through students' high-impact experiences in DC facilitates transformative learning. Political Science student Nicki Guivatchian interned with the U.S. Department of Justice, with plans ultimately to apply for law school. She described the new insight she will apply as she pursues her goals, saying, **"I think that the UCDC internship program allowed me to see what government work within civil rights looks like and how the laws can be interpreted to either help or hurt different minority groups."**

Congressional interns Adán Chávez and Juan Valdez found inspiration in the ability to build upon their own lived experiences through UCDC. Chávez shared that, **"One of the experiences I enjoyed the most was learning how to advance policies that benefit working and migrant families, just like mine."** Valdez, a Purple Heart Marine Corps veteran, also connected his internship with his personal background

and stated, **“I’m so satisfied with the work I’m doing because I see the direct impact I have on veterans and the active duty community.”** He added that the program yielded other offers and boosted his confidence, saying, **“UCDC has been an essential experience for me.”**

For many, new perspectives create a call to action, as for Human Rights Campaign intern Kathryn Young, who says, **“This experience and my time at HRC and UCDC has reinforced my passion for advancing civil and human rights justice and I am excited to bring it back to California.”** Others cite the impact of the program on their career development, like International Studies major and U.S. Department of State intern Tenzin Chomphel, who notes, **“UCDC has given me a foundation to take my career aspirations and turn them into a much more concrete vision for my future.”**

Indeed, UC San Diego alumni shaped by the UCDC program have gone on to elite graduate programs and public service careers across the government and non-profit realms. Abdulai Turay, who completed a Master’s degree in Sociology at George Washington University following his internship with NAACP shares, **“What inspired my pursuit of a graduate degree on the East Coast and more specifically in DC was my experience through the UCDC program. It was surely one of the best moments of my life and I talk about it whenever given the opportunity.”**

The UCDC Program supported by the Teaching + Learning Commons opens doors for students to discover career pathways, expand perspectives, and actively engage in the democratic process. Chemistry major Young Jae Jeong, who spent a summer interning with the UC San Diego Government Research Relations Office supported by the Science Policy Internship Program fellowship, called his UCDC experience **“transformative.” “The best way I can describe it is the following: Entire worlds that I previously was not aware of now exist, thanks to this program.”**