

The National HEPCAMP Association DC Internship

Weekly Journal Entry

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Saturday

“My First Adult Summer”

Packing up my clothes into two suitcases to last me for the next two months was not only stressful, but bittersweet. As I was packing up my blazers, it finally hit me that I'd be walking on the streets of D.C. in less than 12 hours (my flight was at 6 a.m.). It was such a surreal feeling realizing that this was only the beginning of my adult, professional career. Thinking of this made me really sad that I'd never have any more care-free summers but it also made me really excited that I've already been blessed with so many opportunities.

That Saturday morning, I arrived first out of all the interns to D.C., so for the majority of Saturday I was getting to know Virginia and Patrick while the rest of the interns started to flow in. Once the majority of the interns arrived we hopped onto a van and headed to our hotel. Our hotel, Hotel Hive, was really interesting. The staff kept calling their rooms and areas 'unique and efficient' which was code word for small. I thought that was really funny and clever. Once we settled a little bit into our hotel rooms we went off to grab dinner, that's where I got to know the rest of the interns a little bit more. The interns and I ended the night with a spontaneous walk to the White House and capturing our first night together in D.C., a very wholesome moment.



Sunday

“T.T.T.: Traumatizing Target Trip”

That next day, Sunday, was filled with completing some last minute tasks before we started our tourist adventures. In the morning we went to check-in into our ginormous dormitories and get a feel of how our home for the next two months would look like. After my roommate and I spent 20 minutes making our twin-beds into queen size beds in each of our rooms, we paused on rearranging and headed down to go explore D.C. We were so lucky to be able to visit the Holocaust Museum, all thanks to Virginia. The museum was incredible and powerful and one I was very grateful to have been able to experience.

Boldly enough, since we needed a lot of supplies to finish moving into our dorms, we decided to go shopping with only one hour to spare before our next meeting. I think our Target trip was the first time all the HEP/CAMP interns really bonded. We faced a lot of challenges on this trip; not only did we buy the whole store but we also were running late to our first ever meeting due to our Uber canceling on us. Luckily enough, we made it just in time for the meeting with our other cohort; CHCI. Oddly enough the first CHCI intern I met was a mutual friend I had with a friend from my university, definitely a small world. After I got to meet the rest of the CHCI cohort, we grabbed some pizza and headed back to the dorms to unpack.



Monday

“Memorial Day!”

Couldn't name a more perfect city to be in on Memorial Day. As soon as we left our dorms and started our walk around the city, the first thing we experienced was the President's motorcade where I was able to see Dr. Jill Biden through the window, and it was only just 11 a.m.! After we ran into the First Lady, we got to visit every memorial within sight. We visited the Lincoln Memorial, National World War II Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. As tired as our feet were, we kept the party going! We headed to the National Gallery of Art to grab lunch and to enjoy the Memorial Day Parade. The museum was beautiful and the parade was really fun to experience even though it was pouring rain, not to mention hot as well; not a fan of D.C. weather.



Tuesday

“Giev’s First BeReal!”

Tuesday was probably one of my favorite days of the week, it was the first day where I felt like I really belonged. Tuesday kicked off our first day of in-person orientation for CHCI and we got to meet with the CEO and VP of CHCI during their welcoming remarks, as well as spending the day bonding with the rest of the CHCI cohort and getting a feel of how the program is going to be. After orientation we had a little down-time before we got ready to have dinner with the new USDA interns, Irene Bueno from NVG, Giev Kashkooli with UFW, and Tara Ramsey, Millie Bentley-Memon, Dylan Hart with the Office of Migrant Education.

This dinner, I will forever hold deep in my heart. All of the interns and the presenters shared personal stories, advice, and truly made the space feel sacred and safe. I left that dinner feeling like I could truly make an impact in D.C. and that I would have a group to support me along the way. I also got really inspired to volunteer or work for UFW in the future, I really connected with Giev and his passions. Not to mention, he was the first professional in his career to ask ME for a picture, it was a moment I’ll never forget. I also helped him be a part of his first BeReal (a current popular app)!



Wednesday

“Idahoan at Heart”

Wednesday was day two of in-person orientations. That day we met with a lot of presenters that helped us “How to Learn to Write for The Hill.” We learned how to write memos, respond to constituent mail, and how to take good notes. The presenters also shared their straight-up and honest experiences about working on the hill to us. We also learned how to handle our social media accounts and learned how to properly network and how to have productive ‘coffee dates.’

After orientation, some of the interns and I headed to Trader Joe’s to grab some groceries for the rest of the week. On our walk there, I passed by a sidewalk that reminded me of home, only because it looked like the shape of Idaho.



Thursday

“Accidental Surprise!”

For today’s orientation we got to have it in the capitol! After we took our professional headshots, we went to go visit the USDA interns at their jobs and got to meet some incredible USDA presenters. Once the meeting was over we headed to lunch at the capitol and spent the remainder of the day there getting to hear from amazing diverse organizations in D.C. For example, the Congressional Hispanic Staff Association as well as hearing past CHCI Alumni share their stories and experiences.

During dinner we had amazing guests join us! For example; Lisa Ramirez, Senior Executive Director , Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) at USDA joined us, along with many other professionals from USDA. Lisa also brought a special guest, Fabiola Torres-Lara, Political appointee for the Biden-Harris Administration serving as a Confidential Assistant for the USDA-White House Liaison Office. What was even crazier was that Lisa accidentally ran into Fabiola by accident after work and had invited her to our dinner even though this was the first time they had both ever met- outside of email conversations! Fabiola told us that when she heard that the dinner was with HEP/CAMP interns and interns that come from migrant backgrounds she didn’t hesitate to say yes to the offer.

Surprisingly, Fabiola and I actually also had a mutual in common; my CAMP Recruitment Specialist, Victor! Victor had served as her supervisor during her internship in S.A.F. and he was someone she really admired, likewise. I admired Fabiola’s story so much and she motivated me even more and reminded me how important representation truly is. Fabiola was also the first person I gave my business card to, and I’m really grateful it was her. The best accidental surprise ever!



Friday

“Time to Meet My Boss!”

I woke up with so many nerves on Friday. Today was the day where I'd be stepping into the congressional office I'd be working at for the rest of the summer, for the very first time! When I finished my last day of orientation for CHCI, the rest of the interns and I headed to Capitol South to go meet my boss! I'm very grateful to have had the rest of my cohort and Patrick with me because they really helped calm my nerves. Getting to meet my supervisor Jackie, was really exciting, yet intimidating, though only because I was very nervous. As nerve wracking as it was, I did leave that meeting feeling more confident for my first day of work. After I met with my boss, we conveniently walked right next door to meet with my roommate's boss, Carlos Martinez, who works in Congressman's Raul Grijalva's office. Carlos gave us great tips on how to handle Capitol Hill and all its glory and really made it known that we could always reach to him for questions, which I really admired!

For dinner that night, not only did we eat but we also cried! It would be our last dinner as a group with Patrick and Virginia. As hard as it was to accept the fact that they were going to leave us, it really made me reflect on how thankful I was for their guidance and support. As well as realizing how even in such a short time, one is still able to create strong and meaningful relationships. I highly respect and admire Patrick and Virginia for all of the incredible work they do and all of the immense passion they have to help students like me. Safe to say that there were a lot of tears!



Weekend

“On our Own”

I woke up bright and early to go get coffee at Whole Foods and go say bye to Virginia and Patrick. It was so sad realizing that I would no longer be receiving daily reminders on groupme on times we had to meet up, from Virginia, or no longer being able to follow Pat’s lead if I ever was confused on the metro. After we finished crying again, and taking a million photos with both Pat and Virginia, we finally said our last goodbyes.

To take advantage of the beautiful day, some of the cohort and I headed to the Eastern Market to go buy some goodies. We ended up also going to Trader Joe’s to get supplies to make chicken alfredo for dinner as well. When we got back home, tiredness quickly caught up to us, as we all ended up taking a long nap. Though it worked out in our favor because it gave time for the chicken to defrost! Maria and Anna ended up taking full cooking control and I was just there for entertainment. Though I should’ve really interjected instead because Maria ended up burning the bread and what should’ve taken about 40 minutes cooking time, took up to almost two hours long.

When we finally ate dinner, we spent the rest of the night playing UNO and singing to old Mexican love songs at the top of our lungs.

On Sunday, the cohort and I spent the day recharging, prepping for our first week of work, and also took a trip to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. Not to mention, we also bought tickets to the Planetarium and it was the most beautiful and therapeutic experience being able to be surrounded by the galaxy.

