

The National HEPCAMP Association DC Internship

Weekly Journal Entry

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Saturday, May 27, 2023

A Home Away From Home

Washington D.C. is a state in which college students travel just to gain work experience and network. Many leave their families and are more than 2000 miles away, which is my case. I got the opportunity to come to Washington D.C. and intern in the office of Rep. Raul Grijalva. This is a significant achievement for me as I am a first-generation student and immigrant. The HEP/CAMP National Association was able to provide me with the resources needed for me to be successful in this

amazing state but let's not get ahead of ourselves.



My biggest fear of moving to a whole new state was not being able to find a community. I think that there is always this fear of not being able to find those who look like us in the capital of the US because as we know it can be majority white. My community or “my home away from home” became the HEP/CAMP interns and staff. As soon as I arrived I felt the love from Patrick as he welcomed me with a warm hug and a great smile. I think that his presence as a whole made me feel like I belonged there. Soon I met the rest of the interns and in a blink, we were friends, whose backgrounds and life experiences connected them.

My welcoming to Washington D.C was way better than I expected and I was able to ditch that anxiety that had been killing me through my four-hour flight.

Sunday, May 28, 2023

Latinx Unidos

Some will say that the weekend is the day to be lazy and just enjoy the free time but as a HEP/CAMP intern that is the opposite. We got up early and started our day by touring around D.C. and enjoying the historical content of many of the beautiful statues from all over D.C. I came to find that I have a passion or maybe an interest in sculptures. I find it amazing how much detail can go into a sculpture and how much it can represent. Through our touring, I was able to see that there were not as many Latinxs in the capitol. There were a lot of tourists for sure but few of them were Latine. This made me feel out of place but also proud to represent the Mexican/Americans.



Later that day we meet with The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute interns. I learned through our various orientation sessions last week that all interns were from different regions. Some were from Cuba, El Salvador, or even from the Dominican Republic. Even though we all have different backgrounds and experiences I realized that we were all able to come together as Latinxs and encourage each other towards success. I was amazed at the fact that an institution like CHCI brings Latinos to come and represent

their communities and show once more that we latinx's are more than capable of holding leadership positions.

After our first meeting in person, we already had an assignment that was going to be grouped based. I can't stress more the fact that I was nervous to work with individuals who I had never seen nor talked to but I kept a positive mindset as at the end of the day we are all hard working individuals.

Luckily once we were done with our section of the meeting we were dismissed and enjoyed an amazing piece of pizza.

Monday, May 29, 2023

Making It Memorable

“Week one out of ten started.” That’s what I said to myself in the morning as I tried to wake myself up for a long and productive day. It's exciting and scary to think that I will be in this state for ten weeks. It makes me feel grateful for having this opportunity but I also feel somewhat sad to think that I might miss out on things that will occur in my family at this time. But I am here to make this experience memorable and get the most out of it. At the end of the day just like Patrick and Virginia said “You get out of D.C., what you put in it.”



Our day consisted of visiting many memorials to which my favorite would have to be the Lincoln Memorial. I find it amazing to think that the sculpture is solely made out of one rock and made by one person and the history behind it blows my mind. The National Mall as a whole is amazing and I encourage all those who love history to visit. What I disliked about it was the long walks. I'm sure we walked more than an hour and probably placed more steps in today than all last week. But we did sort of cheat as we used the Metro and learned a little about how it works. I had never in my life seen such a sophisticated system of underground transportation. I felt like I was in a movie seeing the underground metros. Even though Patrick and Virginia tried to explain how the Metro worked I could not understand solely anything and my sense of direction was the worst.



We were lucky to have had the opportunity to see the parade for memorial day. It consisted of the military, bright flags, and balloons. I had never seen a parade this huge before and you could truly feel the sense of community as everyone gathered to remember those who have fought for us. To our luck, it started raining as we watched the parade and we had to rush to the National Art Gallery and enjoy lunch.

I'm glad I was able to escape the Arizona heat but I'm really not looking forward to the humidity D.C has.



Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Knowledge is Power

Our first day of in-person orientation with CHCI was tiring. We got to get to know the staff including Marco who is the CEO & president of CHCI. Within each presentation we had during the day I could feel the sense of community as most staff or presenters were latinx. I enjoyed getting to know some of the CHCI Interns and I came to learn that there was only one other Arizonian in the group which was Chris. Chris has been one of the most motivating and positive individuals I have met yet. Our orientation day ended around 2 pm and even though it was still early I could feel my social battery draining. Don't get me wrong I love

meeting new people and learning about everyone's background but it can be tiring.



Later that day we got the opportunity to have dinner with multiple people such as Tara Ramsey, Irene Bueno, and Giev Kashkooli. It felt as if it was a family dinner as we sat at the table to eat pupusas. Through our dinner, our presenters gave us tips and tricks on how to be successful here in D.C. One of the main things they pointed out was networking. They informed us of the importance of getting to know people and building those connections. I knew that networking was important but not to the

point where knowing the right people can get you a job.

After our dinner, we headed back to our apartments in GW and got ready for the next orientation day.

Wednesday, May 31, 2023

Networking...Networking...Networking

7:00 am is the time my alarm went off. I never thought that my first summer of college I would be waking up at 7:00 am in a different state. I love the mornings here in D.C they are fresh and with all the trees and plants it truly makes you see the beauty in this state.



Our second day of orientation consisted more of learning about the importance of being a reliable intern and what you should and should not do. We learned how to properly write memos and what outline we should use. Lastly, we learned the importance of networking. CHCI taught us the do's and don'ts when networking with individuals. They emphasized that your first impression does matter and can leave an impact on the person you are trying to connect with. Many of them told us stories where a person they met at an event or even happy hour later became a reference who helped them get a job. Maggy and John Carlos told us that the most important thing you should be doing here in D.C. is networking. I learned that there are many individuals who are seeking to help underrepresented

populations thrive in this state and to always take advantage of the networking events that go on a daily basis.

After our orientation, we headed back to our apartments and later went grocery shopping at Trader Joe's. I had never heard of this store before and was confused when I saw the different types of products they had. Virginia had told us that this grocery store had really accessible prices but I would have to disagree as a whole loaf of bread was almost five dollars, but compared to whole foods it was cheaper. I was looking to find some good tortillas but there were none.

It turns out that there is no good Mexican food here in D.C and that breaks my heart but I guess I will have to make the carne asada in my apartment. Who's bringing the guacamole?

Thursday, June 1, 2023

New People and Environment

Our morning started by taking the Metro with Virginia. I know that if it weren't for Virginia we would probably get lost and never get to our destination. It took us around 15-20 minutes to get to the capitol through the metro and had to walk a couple of minutes. We took our professional photos and we were all looking



professional,” the next generation of leaders” they said. After our little photo session, we walked 20 minutes to the USDA building to meet their staff. All the staff was welcoming and in some way, the imposter syndrome that had been following me for the past few days went away. They all emphasized how important it is for them to have interns with our background and how they are trying to have more Latinos join their team.

After our meeting with USDA, we went back to the capitol but this time we took the metro. we begged Virginia to go back in the metro as we didn't want to go back to CHCI sweating out of our blazers.

CHCI had a variety of people come and talk to us. A group of individuals we got to meet were CHCI alumni who are currently working on The Hill. They told us how CHCI allowed them to increase their connections and skills which allowed them to get a full-time job on The Hill once done with the program. That to me was inspiring to see that people who look like us are making it happen and getting into leadership positions. They talked about the importance of not listening to that imposter syndrome and always having a positive mindset because “We all belong here and our hard work is paying off.”



Later that day we had the opportunity to go to dinner. All sixteen of us went down to Chinatown to have dinner. When Virginia told us we were going to Chinatown I sort of had this stereotype of how it would look because of the movies I have seen. But it did not look anything like that. We went down to a chinese restaurant and I had the Kung Pao Chicken. Lisa Ramirez who is the Senior Executive Director of the USDA joined us. She has been one of the best I have met yet. We were able to network with her and others that joined us that night and you could feel the sense of community.

Friday, June 2, 2023

Self Growth

Today was all about self-growth in our orientation. We learned the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. I think that being self-aware of what type of mindset you have is important to growing personally and professionally. This workshop truly helped me understand my mindset and what I need to work on to have a growth mindset.



Later that day I got to meet my supervisor, Carlos T. Martinez, who not only is from Arizona but was an intern some summers ago. I really enjoyed getting to know him and was inspired by the fact that he has a similar background to me. Even though he did say that the University of Arizona is the best and I had to disagree on that factor as we all know ASU is the best. I'm really looking forward to working with him and Rep.Grijalva.

We ended the day with dinner as it was going to be our last night with Patrick and Virginia. There were laughs, motivational speeches, and tears as we said bye to them. I truly think that people like Pat and Virginia who always place such a great effort and have the best attitudes towards students make programs like this memorable.



Weekend, June 3 - June 4, 2023

Finally the Weekend

On Saturday we said one last goodbye to Patrick and Virginia. It was hard breaking in some way to think that we were now alone. They took us through every step going from how the Metro goes to what are the basic norms as an intern. I could not thank them enough for everything they did for me. They know I will be contacting them any time soon when I get lost in the metro and need that extra guidance.

Afterwards we decided to go and explore and see what the weekends are like here. We started by going to the Eastern Market which has a lot of little markets with many things going from plants to dog leashes. I kinda saw it like a swamp meet but a really fancy one. After we were done touring around we decided to go to Trader Joe's and get groceries to cook pasta for dinner

Sunday I woke up at 7 am, I was mad at myself for waking up so early. Since I've been here I've been having trouble with the time zones as Arizona is three hours behind D.C. What also has given me some trouble is when the sun goes down. Here in D.C, the sun goes down around 8-9 pm and back home the sun would start going down by 6.

We went to the National Air and Space Museum and It has been one of the coolest museums I have attended yet. I really enjoyed the section on cars and was amazed by the section that talked about the moon landing.

This week has been a roller coaster of emotions but I'm ready to get this internship started!

