

### **Reflections: My Time in the Capital**

It seems like my time in Washington, D.C. ended in a flash. A brief moment that now upon reflection will forever be the definition of my undergraduate experience. I made my closest friends, grew the most professionally and intellectually, and had a great time doing it.

While in D.C., I interned full time at the World Affairs Council DC, a nonprofit that provides the public with regular educational events featuring leading experts in international affairs. I helped organize and run these events with speakers such as Charles Bolden, the director of NASA; then General David Petraeus, author and founder of AID Afghanistan Hassina Sherjan; and many other influential figures. My internship exposed me to intense discourse about complex issues, many times between conflicting views. Coming from an academic background, I was suddenly immersed in pragmatic policy discussions that were alive and tangible. The implications of these arguments actually shape public discourse and eventually policy.

Between my work, classes, and events outside of the program, my experience has blurred into a jumble of memories. However, one common sentiment that connects all of the memories is empowerment and participation. Living in the heart of D.C., meeting countless intelligent and driven individuals, and seeing first hand how the cogs of our democracy work, I felt involved in the system and able to provide a meaningful contribution. It is easy to feel separate from our government and its processes while living on the West Coast; my time in D.C. demysticized and humanized it.

As I write this, I am currently living in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, teaching English as part of the Auxiliar de Conversacion program. However, I plan on returning to San Francisco in February to work in the private sector as well as continue my education. My time in D.C. has undoubtedly prepared me for this next step, and I hope to continue growing as an informed and participating citizen in our democracy. Thank you to the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for helping provide such a rich experience to me.