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CCDE Final Essay

During the Fall 2014 semester, I studied and interned in Washington, D.C., and it was the best four months of my life and college career. I interned full time at the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Public Affairs.

On the second day of my internship, I attended the groundbreaking event for what will soon be the United States Diplomacy Center (USDC) where I witnessed history. John Kerry and four former Secretaries of State, Henry A. Kissinger, James A. Baker III, Madeleine K. Albright, Colin L. Powell, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, gave remarks about the importance of diplomacy and the USDC.

That day set the bar pretty high, and I did not think it could get better. However, through my internship and the UCDC building, I was able to attend numerous astonishing events with guests such as Ruth Bader-Ginsberg, two Undersecretaries of the State, leaders of top non-profits, affluent Haitian diaspora members, and former members of Congress. In some cases, I was even able to meet and speak with former Ambassadors and the State Department spokesperson, Jen Psaki.

For someone interested in politics, Washington, D.C. is the Hollywood of politics. It is the place where you can see Colin Powell driving himself down the street in his gray corvette. You can see a secret service agent walking Bo Obama down the street, and motorcades blocking off the street are a regular occurrence.

In the [Office of Public Engagement](#), I was responsible for overseeing the execution of numerous outreach programs. In this position, I was able to organize and arrange in-person and virtual outreach events for State Department officials to speak about a variety of different issues. The topics ranged from careers in Foreign Service to high-priority issues such as Ebola and cyber security, and the audience ranged from non-profit organizations to university students.

One of the key programs in the office of Public Engagement is the [Foreign Policy Classroom](#) where officials speak about current foreign policy issues.

Another project I worked on autonomously was updating the [State by State map](#), which provides U.S. citizens with information about how the work the State Department does affects U.S. citizens domestically. Divided by each state, the map highlights information about business, jobs, trade, education, partnership, travel and security.

As a Media Studies major, I was also very thrilled when I was able to work on important media content. For instance, I attended the Syracuse Public Diplomacy Symposium where I live tweeted remarks by the State Department spokesperson

and heard from a variety of media experts about the relationship between diplomacy and media, including the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Richard Stengel.

I also contributed to a blog post about a meeting with key figures of the [Haitian-American diaspora](#) where they discussed the future of Haiti, with the five-year anniversary of the disastrous earthquake on the horizon.

In this position, I was fortunate enough to get a first-hand look at the work many different bureaus are doing, giving me a holistic view of the Department. For someone who is interested in all facets of international relations and public affairs, this was a perfect internship for me.

My internship was incredible, but my D.C. experience would not have been the same without the UCDC building. Centrally located within the city, the UCDC building was an amazing resource.

My classes complemented my internship very well, and the Monday night forums in the building were where I was able to hear from important figures in the city such as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Undersecretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, Catherine A. Novelli, former Congresswoman and President and CEO of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Jane Harman, and many more remarkable speakers.

As a transfer student, the many incredible opportunities Berkeley offers often seem like too much to fit into two years. It is overwhelming to say the least, but if I were say that there is one thing a student must experience while at Berkeley, it is UCDC. Whether a student desires to be involved in policy or not, D.C. is an amazing place to learn about how the country works.

What I experienced in Washington, D.C. was a city full of passionate people and organizations working towards their individual goals and an overall goal of civility and democratic engagement. Albeit public or private sector, Washington, D.C. involves professions which can be classified as public service. More often than not, the partisan politics of Congress becomes the face of D.C., and surely this exists, but I believe it is a surface-level issue. Behind the cameras and television broadcasts lies a city of people who are ardent believers in whatever causes they support, and they are willing to engage civilly with their peers to find a way to move policy forward.

During my four months in D.C., I learned so much about myself and what I would like to do after I graduate. Eventually, I intend on returning to D.C. and attending law school where I would like to study international law.

I am tremendously grateful and thankful for the Goldman School's Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement (CCDE) for providing me the opportunity to experience the best semester of my college career.