

### **Brittni Hamilton**

During the Fall 2011 semester, I was enrolled in the University of California, Berkeley, Washington, D.C. program (UCDC). This program not only served as a great introduction to our nation's capital, but also as a great introduction to the working world.

I spent the semester interning with the National Education Association (NEA). I knew that I wanted to focus on education policy, so interning at this large teacher's union was great exposure to all the elements that are involved in the improvement of public education. As a volunteer intern, I had the privilege of working with various departments within the NEA. A significant portion of my time was spent working with the Research Department. Here I examined how much tax money was being given to corporations instead of going toward public services, such as public education and health care. After researching this topic, preparing excel sheets and graphs, and writing up summaries for each local district that was examined, I was shocked to find out how much money was being diverted away from bettering public schools and was instead going towards companies that had no lasting commitment to stay in the area they were locating to.

Overall, I think the NEA is a great organization to be a part of. From the moment my internship started, I was greeted by friendly faces and since then, I have had the opportunity to connect with a number of great, helpful individuals.

The biggest thing I took away from my experience this semester in Washington, D.C., is that in an aggressive place like this, you must always watch your "p's and q's." I have met people in every type of setting in D.C., and I now completely understand why people say you never know who you might be talking with. I feel privileged to have met so many people who have taken the time to speak with me about my greatest passions and about their personal career paths. Every person I met while put something in to perspective for me, which has been extremely helpful as I transition from a student into the working world.

Thank you again, to the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for helping to make my stay in D.C. possible.