

Victor Phu, Fall 2014 UCDC

I am thankful for the Center of Civility & Democratic Engagement for supporting my experience in Washington, D.C. Through the UCDC program, I gained political and intellectual growth from being exposed to the D.C. culture. I can proudly say that this has better prepared me for my professional career and the next steps that I will take post-graduation.

During fall 2014, I interned with the National Education Association, the nation's largest labor union committed to advancing the cause of public education. The NEA has affiliates in every state, and they serve teachers, education support professionals, higher education faculty, staff and students. Through active community organizing and lobbying, the NEA has the ability to further advance voices of the public education system.

Along with the NEA, I interned at the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA)—Asian Pacific American Advocates. The OCA is a national organization dedicated to advancing social, political and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans. They have over 100 chapters, affiliates and partners across the country and act as a network for Asian Pacific American activists. Similar to the NEA, OCA strives to actively serve their community by grassroots organizing, legislative advocacy and direct service.

As an intern for two organizations, I was able to gain a sense of advocacy from both a labor union and non-profit perspective. I had the privilege to work on a project that addressed educational disparities within the Asian Pacific American community. I worked on passing the All Students Count Act, a bill by Congress member Mike Honda that would require State Education Agencies (State Departments of Education) to report disaggregated data at the K-12 levels for their annual state report cards based on the 2010 Census. It would divide the Asian American ethnic group into: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Other Asian. Similarly, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) data would be broken into: Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, and Other Pacific Islander. The legislation would also allow for the cross-tabulation of gender and disability (ex. Female-identified Vietnamese student).

In contributing to this bill, I organized an informational webinar and toolkit for students and non-profits across the country about the All Students Count Act. The [webinar and toolkit](#) discussed how organizations across the nation can contribute towards passing the bill. I worked with NEA's tech department to figure out how to initiate the webinar, and I worked with OCA's staff to organize a lobby day on the hill. In addition, I facilitated a group of about eight active student organizers across the country to advocate for All Students Count. The committee planned objectives of the campaign and brainstormed a variety of advocacy tactics. Although we were not able to pass the bill in a short span of two months, I am excited to know that future interns will be able to build on the foundation of work we created.

In reflecting back on my experience in Washington, D.C., I am more confident about the type of advocacy work I want to do in the future. Across the nation, we need legislative advocates, grassroots organizers and community members to work together to address marginalized issues. In the future, I hope to contribute to shaping public policies with the knowledge I gained in Washington, D.C.