

## **Viviana Morales**

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This semester, I was very fortunate to participate in the UCDC program. Through this experience, I was able to intern in a Senate Office and learn more about the federal legislation process and federal efforts on a variety of issues and their impact not only on California communities but also on different communities nationwide. In my internship, I got to assist with constituent correspondence, give visiting constituents capitol tours, attend policy briefings, and assist legislative staff on special research projects. Some topics I did research on were electronic vehicles in California, palliative care, different Senators' perspectives on the Dream Act, and superfund sites in California and their remediation statuses. However, one of my favorite projects I worked on was translating documents from English to Spanish for the Senator's website, because coming from a Spanish speaking community in California, I believe information should be accessible to all constituents and language should not pose a barrier when it comes to being politically engaged or informed.

As an intern, I got to attend a US Senate HELP Committee hearing on Freedom of Speech on College Campuses. Of course, Senators, both Republican and Democrat, sat in on the hearing, and Ranking Member Senator Patty Murray acknowledged Senator Lamar Alexander, the Chairman of the committee, for being willing to put this hearing together and bring in experts to have a civil discussion on such a hot button issue across the nation. The Senators and experts in that room demonstrated the utmost civility towards one another, and members were allowed to comment and ask questions, resulting in a very interesting, as well as informative, committee hearing. On the daily, I got to walk through the halls of Capitol Hill, but one of my most memorable moments was when I witnessed individuals and allies of the United We Dream organizations fill up the Hart Senate Building on all seven floors to encourage Senators to support a Clean Dream Act. Our office, as well as staff from other offices, came out to support this. I witnessed the actual impact of democratic engagement in our communities and saw how advocacy and public policy came together at our nation's capital for the cause of immigration reform.

The UCDC program served as a structural academic support to understanding democratic processes and democratic engagement. My research seminar, Congress, was taught by a former Chief of Staff to Nancy Pelosi, John Lawrence. Professor Lawrence would go out of his way to help us understand the complicated policy issues, from the several healthcare bills to the tax bill. As an intern on the Hill, I appreciated Professor Lawrence's inside tips on legislation and Capitol processes. For one of our class meetings, we got to listen to Minority Leader Pelosi's current Chief of Staff and have class on the House floor. The elective course I was enrolled in was Campaigns and Elections taught by Ken Goldstein, where we were taught a statistical approach to maximizing constituent turnout that would secure an election. Throughout the semester, this course allowed me to apply in class knowledge to the local elections happening in the DMV area. In our class, we analyzed Virginia's Governor's race, and I learned that grassroots organizing can be essential to a campaign, since it mobilizes support which can result in big wins.

Overall, I am beyond grateful to have participated in UCDC as a Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement Fellow and an Intern for the Office of US Senator Kamala Harris. As a first generation student on the UC Berkeley campus, I always dreamed of participating in UCDC, and last semester I was able to turn that dream into a reality and participate in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Thank you for your support.