

The Running Force of D.C.

Do you want to live in Washington, D.C., and work in the United States Capitol every day? Did you benefit from an internship while you were in college?

The congressional internship program is a great opportunity through Texas Tech University and also through the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR). The internship gives students the opportunity to live and work in Washington, D.C., as well as the chance to develop networking skills, build knowledge of public policy, and have a unique experience.

Madelon Osborne, senior in agricultural communications, interned in the spring 2010 semester for Congressman Mike Conaway. Osborne explained how much she enjoyed her internship in Washington, D.C.

"The internship was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I learned the in and outs of the government system, met several people, and loved living in a different place for a whole semester." Osborne said, "It allowed me to grow as a person by living on my own and exploring new things with people I barely met."

John Duff, senior in agribusiness, interned in the fall 2010 semester for Congressman Kevin Brady. He said his internship was one of the best experiences of his life.

"The four months I spent as an intern changed my life." Duff said. "I took a big step out of my comfort zone when I went to Washington, and that ultimately led to some remarkable changes in my life. I made lifelong friends, enhanced my professional network, and improved my communication skills--all while working for the United States Congress."

While living in Washington, D.C., the Texas Tech interns live at the Texas Tech house, a short two blocks from the Capitol. The house is a place where all Texas Tech interns live, including the interns from the President's Office at Texas Tech. Each semester, there is room for 20 students. The President's Office and CASNR work together, each semester, to assign rooms to all the Texas Tech interns.

"You won't find better intern housing anywhere in D.C." Duff said. "The building is in good shape, the neighborhood is safe, and it only takes five minutes to walk to work. And if that's not enough, I could see the Statue of Freedom that sits on top of the Capitol dome from my bedroom window. Tech interns are really fortunate to have such a great place to call home."

Students work for various Congressmen, Congresswomen, Senators, and congressional committees on Capitol Hill. Usually the majority of students work

for Texas Congressmen or the student's home district. Some of the offices Texas Tech interns have worked with are: Congressman Randy Neugebauer, Congressman Mac Thornberry, Congressman Mike Conaway, the House Committee on Agriculture, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, and Congressman Lamar Smith.

Norman Hopper, Executive Associate Dean of Academic and Student Programs of CASNR, visits the interns every spring semester. Hopper said when he sees everyone in their individual offices it makes him happy to see them doing so well.

"It is funny because I like to visit with them in their office, with them and their intern coordinator." Hopper said, "It is a totally different light. Here, it is in the light of an academic setting. But there, you see them and they are in that office and just beaming."

Osborne explained she made relationships with staff and the internship really opened her up to learning more about the government.

"I feel the internship made me learn so much more about political work and the government," Osborne said. "I have learned great communications skills and have gained great relationships with staff and faculty on the Hill and in the office where I worked."

Duff explained the necessity to network and make relationships with people. He said he will never know where those friendships and professional networks will get him later on in life.

"This program will open doors for you if you're willing to knock on them," Duff said. "Take advantage of every networking opportunity you get and always keep an eye out for promising professional leads. Most of all, though; have fun and get to know those around you. The friendships you cultivate will mean more to you later in life than anything you accomplish professionally."

Duff recommended that if students are willing to put themselves out there, they will have the best experience of their life and learn so much about the nation's history.

"If you're willing to work hard, keep an open mind, and live a few inches outside of your comfort zone, D.C. will be the greatest experience you'll ever have," Duff said. "Even if you don't follow politics, watching American history being written will give you a whole new respect for our country and our leaders." **T**

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