

Life of a Congressional Intern

To today's collegiate, it seems obvious that employers will look just as much at what we did in school, as how we did in school. Where we once thought of grades as the key to success in the workplace, employers now rate our worth on our education above and beyond the classroom. Most everyone applying for today's jobs will have to answer the question, "What kind of experience do you have?" Hearing this for the first time can lead one to believe that they wasted thousands of dollars on an education that doesn't count as much as real-life experience. The solution to this is "The Internship," which is a way for students to increase their capital in a workforce asking for more of its workers than academic marks.

I am an alumnus of Tulare Western High School and currently a student at the University of California, Irvine. I was afraid, regardless of where I interned, my duties would be nothing more than filing papers and answering phones. I asked myself how duties such as these could prepare me for a career in which my duties are much greater. I would be unused, unimpressed, and unpaid. I wanted more. I wanted responsibility and experience. I wanted an education unreachable by the standard collegiate lecture hall. I was lucky enough to find all of these in the office of Congressman Devin Nunes.

Prior to arriving in Washington, I was told that this would be an internship beyond the mundane. I listened to peer after peer return from interviews disappointed by the role they would play in their new internships. I returned from my interview optimistic. The idea that I would be given more of a job than an internship hinged on the policy of the office. I was told "It is a waste of our time, and yours, if we don't use you to your full potential." This statement rang true, and within a couple of weeks I had been given several legislative projects, as well as office duties.

As time progressed so did my duties, as well as the depth of my experience. I was able to work on issues dealing with veterans affairs, agriculture, and the environment. Moreover, I was able to observe and meet several influential people ranging from various members of the House of

Representatives and Senate to Secretary of State Colin Powell. I was able to discuss issues with foreign heads of state and dignitaries ranging from the Ambassadors of Taiwan and Panama to the President of the Portuguese Parliament. Congressman Nunes went out of his way to make sure his interns were included in these types of meetings.

Recently, while leading a group of constituents through the U.S. Capitol, I was able to meet former President Gerald Ford. We met while he was on his way to address Congress on his birthday in July. My group and I all wished him happy birthday as he walked toward us. He shook my hand, smiled, and boasted, "We made it fellas," having made it to his 92nd birthday.

The willingness of the congressman to include us in this type of situation is indicative of the quality of work environment as a whole. The congressman has surrounded himself with intelligent, highly motivated, and friendly individuals. He has also built the office around the ideas of teamwork and trust. Most offices give the supervision of the intern to one individual, leaving it up to them to find the interns "something to do." In contrast, I worked closely with everyone in the office, including the congressman, and was never without a workload. At the same time, many of my fellow interns found their work mind numbing.

When I boarded a plane for Washington, D.C., I carried with me certain expectations, all of which were exceeded by my experience in this office. Congressman Nunes has been able to put together an office, as well as an internship program, that goes well beyond educational. For a student, who wanted more than just what his college degree promised him, Congressman Nunes has given me solid work experience, and more importantly, a tremendous life experience. At a time when so many people are skeptical of politics, I take comfort in my first-hand knowledge that the 21st district of California has nothing to fear. I would like to thank Congressman Nunes, and his staff for giving me the experience of a lifetime.

—Matt Machado

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He served as an intern in Rep. Devin Nunes' Washington, D.C. office from June-August.