

**Fellowship Reports from Undergraduate Students
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Name: Alicia Brown

Major: Chemical Engineering

Internship Company: House Energy and Commerce Committee

Position: Energy Subcommittee Intern

Location: Washington, D.C.

During the spring of 2018, I had the opportunity to intern with the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which exercises legislative oversight over issues relating to energy, the environment, health, telecommunications, consumer protection, and commerce. This committee is unique in that it is both the longest-standing and the broadest in jurisdiction, maintaining principal responsibility for five cabinet level departments and seven independent agencies. Although I had the opportunity to attend hearings across disciplines, I primarily worked with the energy and environmental subcommittees due to my background in engineering and interest in energy policy.

Going into this internship, I was fully prepared to do typical intern work—answering the phone, making copies, and getting coffee—but I was fortunate to be placed with a staff that was invested in allowing me to pursue my interests and work on substantive projects. Rather than giving Capitol tours, I found myself preparing questions for hearings, writing summaries of reports, and attending meetings with senior staff members. While some of my work was automatically assigned, I was also afforded the latitude to create my own experience. If I wanted to attend a briefing on immigration reform or a hearing on higher education, I was encouraged to do so, and if a staff member was working on a project that interested me, I was always allowed the time to discuss their work over coffee. As I continued to build rapport with my colleagues, I was offered increasingly important projects, ultimately getting to play an instrumental role in one of our most impactful projects of the semester: high-octane fuel and vehicle reform legislation.

When I first applied for this position, I knew that I wanted to apply my technical background to public policy issues, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to do so in a governmental or private sector setting. Through my work with the Committee, I had the opportunity to meet with individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including government affairs representatives from organizations such as ConocoPhillips, ISO-NE, and NRECA and staffers from FERC, the Department of Energy, the National Laboratories, and our counterpart in the Senate, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. In addition to exposing me to an expansive list of career options and confirming my interest in energy policy, this internship enabled me to begin to build the network that will be essential to my future success. In my short time on the Hill, I quickly realized that job openings are rarely, if ever, posted online, and that the surest way to secure an interview is to have a connection to the hiring office. By choosing to intern for a semester rather than a summer, I gave myself the opportunity to develop deeper relationships with a greater number of staffers, stakeholders, and Congressmen, which I believe will be invaluable as I pursue full-time work in the future.

There is something remarkable about watching Congress work from the inside, but it is even more incredible to have the opportunity to contribute to its work. Over the past five months, I have developed both a greater appreciation for and a greater frustration with our elected representatives, but more importantly, I have developed a profound sense of optimism for our future and the role that I will one day play in it. Thank you to the Honors College for giving me this opportunity.