

**Research reports from Undergraduate Students
receiving support from the
National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research
Center (NSPARC) via the Shackouls Honors College
NSPARC Fellowships**

Summer 2023

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Date: 11/02/2023

Name: Erin Clifford

Major: Political Science

Internship Company: Shared Hope International

Location: Washington, D.C.

During the summer of 2023, I had the opportunity to be a Policy and Communications intern at Shared Hope International in Washington, D.C.. Shared Hope is a non-profit organization that focuses on combating human trafficking and sexual exploitation, particularly the trafficking and exploitation of women and children. Shared Hope International works through various programs and initiatives to raise awareness, advocate for policy changes, provide resources and support to survivors, and engage in research and education about human trafficking.

One of Shared Hope's critical initiatives involves the annual release of "Report Cards" for U.S. states and the District of Columbia. These assessments evaluate each state's anti-trafficking laws and their enforcement, with a specific emphasis on domestic minor sex trafficking. The comprehensive evaluation criteria encompass aspects like criminal provisions, protective measures for child victims, collaboration among stakeholders, and availability of survivor services. These report cards play a pivotal role in shedding light on the strengths and shortcomings of state-level responses to domestic minor sex trafficking, driving advocacy for much-needed legal reforms.

My primary focus during my internship involved supporting the policy team and legal fellow in analyzing state legislation. This experience provided me with a deep insight into the legislative process, particularly at the state level, and enabled me to develop vital skills in legal

research and the interpretation of proposed legislation. These skills are of immense value as I prepare for my next career step, which involves pursuing a legal career. Additionally, I had the privilege of leading a project aimed at revamping Shared Hope's state-based contacts in every state and the District of Columbia. The overhaul of these contacts proved crucial in establishing connections with legislators, stakeholders, and advocates nationwide. These report cards are distributed to state-based contacts and legislators, serving as resources for informed decision-making in the realm of policy and advocacy. To ensure our efforts were effective and accessible, we maintained an up-to-date database of information that stands as a critical tool for those who rely on it for their advocacy work.

My internship at Shared Hope International this summer was a invaluable experience. It deepened my understanding of the legislative process, honed my legal research skills, and highlighted the importance of advocating for policies that protect the vulnerable. This internship has been a stepping stone toward my future career in law, providing me with practical skills and a deeper appreciation for the impact of effective policy advocacy in the public interest sector.

Date: August 1, 2023

Name: Crane, Jodee

Major: Political Science

Internship Company: Congressman Michael Guest, MS-03

Location: Washington, DC

During the summer of 2023, I worked as a Congressional Intern for Congressman Michael Guest of Mississippi's Third District. Congressman Guest's office focuses heavily on constituent services and casework as well as helping aid him in the policy area of his committee assignments. The Congressman's schedule was always full because he is the Chairman of the House Ethics Committee, the Vice Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, and on three subcommittees in the Appropriations Committee.

During my six week internship, I learned a myriad of things about the office as well as what it means to be a Congressional staffer. My primary duty was to answer and log constituent calls. On average, I answered twenty calls a day. Before this summer, I had no idea how many people called their congressperson to inquire or comment on the status of a Bill or even about their personal life. I realized that my generation does not understand how accessible our representatives are, and that they do listen. While I was "just" an intern answering their calls, I was required to log their comments in a database that the Congressman looked over to gauge what his constituents were asking for. There was also an organized system of giving constituents responses and answers to their questions. I was very impressed by the office's rate of response to those who called and wanted to know more than I could give.

Through answering these phone calls, I learned how to be more understanding, patient, and professional. There were some hard conversations and people who were rude or abrasive,

however there were also phone calls where I got to help people and see the service taking place clearly. For instance, an elderly lady from Quitman, MS called to ask about the Archusa Dam with the Pat Harrison Waterway. This dam was very important to the community's economy and broke twice in the last 20 years. She expressed that the Congressman needed to help fix it quickly, and the next day he had someone in his district office at a city meeting to help.

Of course, answering phone calls was not the entire job. I also learned how to navigate the Capitol buildings and give tours to visitors. I went to briefings the staff could not attend and gave notes, I sat in on meetings with constituents that came to DC to meet with the Congressman, and during my free time, I learned the names and states of all 535 members of Congress.

My favorite part about the internship was building relationships with the office staff and Mississippi State University alum who live in the area. The city is a wonderful place for professional development and networking, and I was able to expand my circle immensely.

All in all, the opportunity to go to Washington, DC and stay there was something I dreamed about since I was a little girl. This experience gave me the ability to see firsthand the conjunction of our nation's past and its very future. I toured museums, went to committee hearings, toured the House floor, heard from amazing Speakers, and met some of the political leadership at the time. This was the opportunity of a lifetime for me and the culmination of undergraduate experiences within government and leadership. During my time in DC, I grew as an advocate, a scholar, and a person. I credit this summer to helping my next steps more than any of my other collegiate experiences.

Date: May 29, 2023 – August 11, 2023

Name: Marlow, Tanner

Major: Agronomy

Internship Company: The National Cotton Council of America

Location: Washington D.C.

An Eye-Opening Experience

The summer of 2023 was not only hot, but also very difficult. During the summer of 2023, I worked at the National Cotton Council of America in their Washington D.C. branch. The National Cotton Council is a trade association for the cotton industry that is based in Memphis, Tennessee. The main goal of the National Cotton Council is to protect the seven pillars of cotton, which include producers, ginners, warehousemen, merchants, cottonseed handlers, cooperatives, and manufacturers. The Washington D.C. branch advocates on behalf of the organization in the nation's capital in order for policies to be made to benefit the whole cotton industry.

Throughout my internship, I worked on many things. One of those things included meeting staffers of representatives and senators in their offices. To prepare for these meetings, I would create mock-ups that would be handed to the congressman's staffers. I would also be responsible for organizing important information regarding cotton in the representative's district or senator's state. I would find out if there was a textile mill, a research institution, the number of acres farmed for cotton, and the amount of cotton produced in the area of interest. I created a spreadsheet that would streamline the process of knowing this information and would make it

very easy for the branch to inform how certain positions are important for the congressman to consider due to who their constituents are and what is in their district or state.

I also got involved in the D.C. Agriculture Intern Network. I was recommended to join this network by my boss, Robbie Minnich, and with this group, I attended and organized networking events. At these events, we would talk to people in many different agriculture-related organizations, such as American Farm Bureau or CropLife America, and we would be presented with information about what this organization's mission was and how they go about accomplishing their goal. I got the opportunity to organize one of these events, and each person in the office spoke about their roles, how they work to achieve the mission of the National Cotton Council, and how the purpose of the National Cotton Council is a worthy cause to pursue. Besides all the free lunches, I also made many new connections and friends.

In addition to networking and meeting with congressional staff, I also got to participate in a weekly newsletter called Cotton's Week. I worked with Senior Government Relations Manager, Jeff Kuckuck, to create Cotton's Week articles to send out to members. As the Washington D.C. branch, we would inform members of agricultural-related policies, initiatives, and hearings that are occurring on the Hill. Some examples of articles that I wrote include when Torres Smalls was approved to be the Deputy Secretary of the USDA and the plan given in The Farm Program Integrity Act.

Politics is always changing, and to write these articles effectively, I would be assigned to attend USDA listening sessions, trade panels, cotton quality discussions, coalition meetings, and congressional hearings. This would help with writing Cotton's Week and informing co-workers about what was being discussed in those meetings. For example, I attended a coalition meeting about the Sackett case and was told to take notes to give to the office's Science and

Environmental Issues Manager, Steve Hensley, to use going forward as information to inform other coalitions. I did the same for the USDA listening sessions regarding crop insurance and how cotton farmers currently view their safety net for farming and how the farmer believes the government can help increase that safety net.

In addition to all the office work and congressional work, I also got to go to some amazing conferences for free. One of those was the Universal Food Forum, in which the conference mainly talked about the role media has in transmitting scientific data to the public. I also attended the Pesticide Discussion hosted by CropLife America. They presented many lectures on their mission as an organization along with discussion and questions about pesticide policy and how pesticides are used today. Finally, the National Cotton Council hosted a conference for new leaders in the council called the Policy Education Program that familiarized participants with the D.C. climate around appropriations, legislation, and current issues.

Lastly, I participated a lot in the Demmer Scholars course. We would have weekly classes talking about the roles each branch of government and other outside forces, such as lobbyists and media, had on policy along with presentations of where fellow classmates have interned. These weekly meetings taught by The Honorable Mark Rey informed the class of just how complicated policy-making really is and how many balls are actually being juggled when policy is being moved into law. Along with classes and presentations, weekend trips were planned, and these trips were such a highlight of the week. I would look forward to waking up early on Saturday mornings to see friends and go exploring all the while learning something new from a very smart person.

Throughout this internship, I was encouraged to learn more every day. This was preempted by my boss giving me a huge book of government acronyms. But this idea of learning

over the whole summer and coming to work ready to learn something that was previously unknown was something that made this internship fun. I feel much more comfortable in the city now than I did before, and I see how people operate and live within a city. However, learning how the city operates is one of the reasons I will put more thought into coming back to the city and working. Life is fast and public transit is slow. It was very expensive, and always loud. One of the main lessons I got out of this experience is to value what I have back home: silence, space, and community. Although this experience was very difficult, and I had a lot of growing pains living within the city and going to work, ultimately, the value of this experience along with the many things I learned about farm policy, work-life balance, and regular everyday life in the city along with how people act in the city has opened my eyes to human nature, integral history, and the things that bind all different types of people together rather than the divisions that rest between them.

Date: November 1, 2023

Name: McFatridge, Carson

Major: Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture

Internship Company: House Committee on Natural Resources

Location: Washington, D.C.

During the summer of 2023 I had the opportunity to work for the United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources as a William A. Demmer Scholar Recipient. The committee can trace its jurisdictional history back to the Committee on Public Lands which was established in 1805. Since then, it has become much more and now encompasses a multitude of public interest sectors from hunting and fishing to oil procurement and usage regulations.

What I enjoyed most about my time with the committee was how different each day was. Over the summer I worked in two different subcommittees, Federal Lands and Waters, Wildlife, and Fisheries. I had a multitude of duties depending on whether the House was in session or not. I assisted in legislative research by creating memos to be distributed to the members. I was able to attend meetings with experts both in natural resources related fields and the federal political sphere where I also took notes and wrote memos. I was also able to spend a few weeks with the communications team where I designed graphics for the committee's social media and wrote a press release. The purpose of the committee is to protect America's natural resources and balance them with the needs of the American public. Getting to work under Representative Bruce Westerman (AR-4) was such a special opportunity. Being from Arkansas myself, it was poignant to see the values I held and experiences I shared with someone who was a desired and qualified leader. I saw a team of individuals within the committee staff from all around the nation

and on both sides of the aisle working together for the common goals of conservation, education, sustainability, and accessibility.

Growing up in a rural area, on a farm, and as an avid hunter I have always felt a strong connection to the outdoors. I understand the valuable role that stewardship plays in affording future generations the experiences that I cherish. Getting to see first-hand the measures that are taken federally to ensure this interest was humbling, because it made me realize just how passionate I was about my future career and gave me reassurance that I am on the right path. After graduation, I am interested in attending law school and pursuing agricultural or environmental law and policy. As I reflect on my time in the Demmer Scholars Program, I am thankful not just for the employment opportunity I received, but also the class time each week led by the program director, the Honorable Mark Rey. In these classes we were able to learn about governmental practices and procedures. Each weekend, we also took field trips to the surrounding DMV area to learn about medical research conducted on wildlife, agritourism, the U.S. Geological Survey, and more.

Date: November 6, 2023

Name: Phillips, Josh

Major: Political Science and Economics

Internship: Mississippi Office of Homeland Security

Location: Jackson, Mississippi

During latter half of the summer of 2023, I worked as a Consultant for the Grants and Finance Division of the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security (MOHS), which strives to develop and continually enhance state-level planning, preparation, response to, recovery from, and mitigation of the many threats and hazards, particularly terrorism and threats of terrorism.

In the beginning of my internship, I underwent several introductory courses for Department of Homeland Security employees to learn about the structure and mission of the organization before beginning work on my main project. I was tasked with a small assignment to write an informative summary on the structure of the Mississippi Fusion Center, which receives threat information from federal government, analyzes that information, and disseminate that information to local agencies. The Fusion Center serves as primary focal point for information gathering, and is where the MOHS is located.

My internship was primarily centered around analyzing the budget of the MOHS, which receives funding directly from the U.S. federal government, making it unique among the Mississippi offices within the Department of Public Safety. My work focused on analyzing why the MOHS, which protects a major river, a coastline, two SEC universities, and a nuclear facility, receives the same amount of funding as Montana, which contains significantly less at-risk locations. To do this, I was given access to all of the reporting mechanisms and documents available, including Biannual Strategy Implementation Reports, the most recent Threat and

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment/Stakeholder Preparedness Review processes, and several Investment Justifications for various grant funding solicitations. I conducted research in conjunction with the office, and drafted a report to be sent to the U.S. Appropriations Committee containing analysis of the origins of the discrepancy of funding amounts and backed by evidence and reasoning for why the MOHS requires more funding.

In this official report, entitled “*HSGP Formula and Methodology Analysis: Mississippi’s Allocation*”, I concluded that the MOHS had several opportunities to increase their funding by implementing a better reporting system of threats and hazards to be included in their Risk Assessment, which would fill more grant criteria and increase their allocation according to the Homeland Security Grant Program formula. The report was sent on to the federal Department of Homeland Security, and while the document contains FOUO (For Official Use Only) material and is not available to the general public, it was published within the office and is available for use by MOHS employees. Through my research, I also wrote and submitted a second publication, this one entitled “*Review of Mississippi’s Homeland Security Grant Program Investment Justification for FY2023*”.

Through my internship, I developed considerable experience observing and working with U.S. governmental budgeting systems, which has been foundational in helping me understand how the U.S. creates and prioritizes funding requests. I also was able to observe first-hand how a government organization partners and collaborates with localities to address security threats and protect marginalized populations, further preparing myself for a government career. Overall, the internship experience in a smaller government office such as the MOHS provided a potent way for me to participate in the hands-on aspects of government work, rather than just making coffee, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to create change that this opportunity offered.