Internship Venues

Internships fall into three basic categories – legislative, administrative, non-governmental – each reflecting a distinct area of the policymaking process.

1) The Legislature: Where public policy is made

   Students interning with the Legislature are placed in the Capitol offices of individual senators or Assembly members, or with legislative committees. Most placements, however, are with individual members. Depending on the issue, committee offices are small, short on desk space and without extra computers to accommodate interns. Students interested in a particular issue area – education, health care, environment, public safety, etc. – intern with legislators who serve on relevant committees; if possible, with the chair of that committee. Prior to placement, a student may be asked to self-describe his or her politics to ensure that he/she is placed with a politically compatible legislator. A few internships may be available in the district offices of Sacramento-area legislators.

   What to expect: Students are exposed both to the process and politics of policymaking. They may be asked to perform routine office tasks, such as answering phones, opening mail and sorting emails. UCCS internship guidelines ask that this kind of non-substantive routine be kept to a minimum; no more than 25 percent of a student’s time should be spent on “grunt work.” More substantive work may include issue-based research, data and report analysis, event planning and coordination, media relations, and constituent services. Students should expect to attend staff and other meetings even if not an active participant in the meeting – the “fly on the wall” participant.

2) The administration: Where public policy is implemented or practiced

   An administrative internship may be with a constitutional officer, state agency, department, board or commission that implements policy related to a student’s interests. Agencies, departments and commissions are divided into many varied units, each with its own mission and specialty. (The Department of Education, for instance, has units dedicated to English learners, charter schools, curriculum, administration, teacher credentialing, etc.) They also might be units of local government and/or education. Students are placed with the unit that most closely fits the student’s goals and interests.

   What to expect: Students should expect to perform research and analysis; analyze data and legislation affecting the agency; plan workshops, symposia and other agency-related events; maintain databases and websites; and assist with media relations and implementation of various agency and/or department programs. Students with technical and/or scientific training may be asked to assist with fieldwork.

3) Non-governmental organizations: Where public policy is influenced

   Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, are non-profits, professional associations, business and labor organizations that attempt to influence government on a wide range of policy issues. They include, but are not limited to, such diverse groups as the Sierra Club, California Medical Association, Western Center on Law & Poverty, Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, Consul General of Mexico, Humane Society, California Business Roundtable, Students First, University of California State Government Relations, Institute for Local Government, Common Cause, CalPIRG, and California School Boards Association. Students are placed with the NGO that mostly closely fits his or her interests.
**What to expect:** Students work on research and analysis, conference and workshop planning, legislative and data analysis, media relations, member services and recruitment, rallies and demonstrations, legislative relations, database and website maintenance, politics and political campaigns.