

***Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL)
Interns and Scholars Program***

Interning with federal government agencies, such as those below that CAPAL's interns and scholars joined last summer, provides an opportunity to gain exposure to many of the issues and challenges our country and government face. Working with the government allows for insight into areas from the First Lady's priority on lowering childhood obesity to executive-congressional relationships, foreign affairs, trade, poverty, environmental stewardship, economic development, telecommunications policy, and food sustainability and integrity. For personal understandings from CAPAL's interns and scholars who held government internships, please continue to read about their experiences.

Interns

Hui Kim, UCLA, Master of Public Policy, Public Affairs – Rural Development, US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Some of the interesting work I was able to do involved providing legislative research on Congressional members' stances on rural broadband and housing policies. This was in preparation for two subcommittee hearings, both of which I attended. Other activities that I enjoyed included aiding in the procurement of press releases for the Rural Development division's Public Affairs office. In addition, some of my responsibilities were comprised of disseminating *Congressional Quarterly Daily* to relevant offices, faxing grant and loan documentation to Congressional offices, and referring inquiries to appropriate offices while answering questions myself when possible.

I think the CAPAL experience was certainly more than I expected. My internship placement seemed carefully thought out, and the board members were always available for information, advice, useful anecdotes, stories, and, most importantly, time, consideration, and kindness. Some of the WLP sessions were extremely interesting, engaging, and fun, but all of them were informative (and a great place to get Wednesday dinners). And every week, I was simply amazed that the board had time to set up guest speakers and events with all their busy schedules.

CAPAL was a great place to get first-hand information about working in public service, a great resource for information by expert panels, and a wonderful way to provide a social network among the interns (most of whom are not local). CAPAL was simply a wonderful experience from start to finish.

Clarissa Koga, University of Hawaii – Food Survey Research Group, Agricultural Research Service, USDA

During my CAPAL internship, I worked at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in the Food Survey Research Group (FSRG). FSRG allowed me the opportunity to lead efforts to produce an electronic database of the large amount of food items used daily within the agency. I also worked to perform quality control on food survey results and recipes.

Being a CAPAL intern afforded me the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual. The internship at ARS helped me to learn about the latest agriculture related research being conducted within USDA. Participation in CAPAL's Washington Leadership Program (WLP) provided me with comprehensive insight into our nation's most prominent issues such as health care and foreign policy. Aside from the ARS internship and WLP, I believe the best aspect of the experience was spending the summer in Washington, DC and being a part of the CAPAL family. The CAPAL board members gave all of the interns continual guidance and encouraged our professional development. Overall, the experience of being a CAPAL intern was invaluable and words cannot do it justice.

Carla Laurel, University of San Francisco – Rural Utilities Services, Rural Development, USDA

My internship placement was in the USDA's Rural Development, Rural Utilities Services (RUS) division. Because it was such an exciting time to be in Washington, the majority of my work had to do with the stimulus package given to RUS. I worked closely with those designing the application and economic framework for the distribution of loans and grants. As an economics major, they made sure to connect me with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Economist and I was able to assist him with the economic analysis of the stimulus package. Essentially, through the internship placement with CAPAL, I was privileged to work directly with extraordinary people and projects that were relevant to major issues being discussed in Washington. Additionally, I was able to utilize my skills and gain experience doing work in my desired field of economic development.

The CAPAL experience goes beyond the privileged Washington Leadership Program seminars at the Capitol Building. It is more than the internship placement at the USDA, and even the opportunities you are given to be surrounded by inspirational, high-ranking Asian American governmental officials. CAPAL immerses you into a community of people who want to inspire, cultivate, and help assist young Asian American leaders interested in making a difference. The support and experience I had in Washington, DC went beyond my expectations. Among other organizations, CAPAL genuinely cares about your leadership development, as well as your personal development in DC. Overall, the CAPAL experience gave me the support and confidence to pursue my public service goals not only in Washington, DC, but in my local community.

Annelisa Luong, UC Berkeley – Urban and Community Forestry, Cooperative Forestry, Forest Service, USDA

During my internship, I worked closely with the directors of the Urban and Community

Forestry division of Cooperative Forestry. The Forest Service (FS) is a very unique part of the United States Department of Agriculture as they have a tight-knit staff. In the USDA, there was a series of speaker series where interns of all types got the chance to meet officials working in different fields in the USDA. FS had a program specifically for their interns. It was great to have these different events to learn more about opportunities in government positions.

As an intern, I learned about the different divisions within FS and the varieties of programs within Urban and Community Forestry. I was encouraged to work with people outside of my specific office and to attend conferences nearby. I attended meetings in which the program coordinators discussed how the projects were moving forward. On a day to day basis, I helped organize a speaker series that educated FS employees and the general public about topics in urban forestry. I also provided an assessment of Urban and Community Forestry's website in hopes of streamlining it and making it more user friendly. I even had the chance to work with the Litigations division of FS after learning about what the work entailed. FS is a place where one can really explore the different types of jobs in the agency.

Interning in Washington was a very exciting and eye-opening experience for me. In general, being in DC really influenced me to enter public service and really drove me to work in politics because I was inspired by the amazing people surrounding me. CAPAL really helped me by providing a network of people who were familiar with the area and community. The WLP seminars allowed me to meet other interns in other programs, as well as experienced APA professionals in DC. CAPAL's WLP sessions gave us the opportunities to learn about programs we established in our respective communities. It was also comforting to know that the Board of Directors was there to mentor us and support us in this learning experience.

Chinh Tran, Stanford – Agricultural Research Services, USDA

During my internship at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), I worked on various research projects that dealt with how processed foods can be used to prevent obesity. I was exposed to a new laboratory and research setting and learned a lot about the research process. Specifically, I was part of a project that looked at different starch polymer diets and its role in the development of metabolic syndrome in rats and hamsters, and I also worked on protein extraction samples and blueberry research. I enjoyed my time at the ARS because I was able to do a wide variety of things and helped with a lot of different projects, so every week of my internship had a new and different aspect to it.

Hsiang-Wen (Winnie) Wang, University of Pennsylvania – Office of Catfish Inspection Programs, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA

In the summer of 2009, I interned at the Office of Catfish Inspection Programs (OCIP), a division under the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). My daily duties included proofreading and editing documents, drafting memorandums, researching, and compiling data in Excel. In addition to these duties, I attended weekly staff meetings to report on the

progress for my projects. I had three main projects during my time with OCIP. My first project entailed researching, analyzing, and compiling data for catfish imports and exports. Using Excel, I compiled tables and graphs for the amount of catfish imported into the US from different countries. My second project consisted of drafting a five-year strategic plan for OCIP to define the division's missions and goals. For my third project, I had to research and gather information on personnel misconduct investigations. Within every agency, there are established guidelines regarding proper behavior and conduct in the workplace. My job was to compile and synthesize the rules and guidelines into a PowerPoint presentation, which was then used to guide investigators to conduct investigations.

My CAPAL experience was extremely rewarding. Without CAPAL, I would never have had the opportunity to work with such a great group of people in OCIP or meet so many ambitious individuals through CAPAL's WLP workshops. Through WLP, I learned about policy topics ranging from health care, to foreign affairs, to the domestic economy, and many more. The different groups of panelists at WLP each week provided us with varying perspectives into the same issue or topic. I walked out of CAPAL and WLP with a much deeper understanding of public policy. Not only that, I had the chance to network with various professionals working in the field of public policy. The conversations and relationships I established with them opened doors and disclosed to me many career options available in this field. Thanks to CAPAL, I made great, life-long friends. I know I will keep in touch with them for a long time to come.

Barbara Wei, University of Pennsylvania – State Outreach and Technical Assistance, Office of Employee Education and Training, Food Safety Inspection Service, USDA

This summer I interned at the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Services division, specifically the State Outreach and Technical Assistance division within the Office of Employee Education and Training. Under the supervision of Ralph Stafko, JD and Dr. Janet McGinn, I was able to learn extensively about the federal government's role in the regulation of food safety at the retail, wholesale and production levels. During my internship, I completed many projects including starting an internal newsletter to increase communication between the departments within the Office of Employee Education and Training, as well as developing PowerPoint presentations for pitching new projects. In addition, I was also able to attend many special events including Unity Day (which brought together all of the departments of FSIS) and conferences that related to food safety issues in the DC area. I was also given the opportunity to structure my own experience. This meant that my supervisor brought me to many high level meetings, and allowed me to meet many people from different departments. After making these connections, I set up appointments with these people to discuss their job functions, and their career paths. I was able to hold conversations with people in the international policy division, as well as people from the industry side such as the food safety manager for Shoppers foods. Lastly, this internship really allowed me to see the effect of USDA's FSIS group in action, as they organized three field trips for the interns to go to large and small slaughterhouses for beef, poultry and swine. This nine week experience greatly increased my knowledge about the federal government and the role it has in regulating

and implementing laws. In addition to completing projects, I was also able to learn more about the divisions within USDA, and its role in the meat and poultry industry.

Scholar

Tony Nguyen, University of Pennsylvania – China Desk, Bureau of East Asian-Pacific Affairs, Department of State

Greetings Potential CAPAL Interns,

My name is Tony Nguyen, a junior at the University of Pennsylvania. Last summer, I was offered the extraordinary opportunity to intern at the US Department of State in the Bureau of East Asian-Pacific Affairs, China Desk. My office is in charge of handling international affairs with China, Hong Kong, and Mongolia.

Working at the China Desk was dynamic. Aside from daily tasks such as attending office meetings and writing diplomatic briefs to the US Embassy in Beijing, I never knew what to expect. Some of my exciting responsibilities included escorting the US Mongolian Ambassador to meetings and organizing a high level US-China conference in which I got to see President Barack Obama and shook hands with Hillary Clinton! Although my experience is specific only to those working in my bureau, every State Department intern, regardless of their division, can expect a summer filled with learning and excitement.

Overall, my summer in DC was one of the best summers of my life—largely thanks to my experiences with CAPAL. As a CAPAL intern, I took part in its exciting Washington Leadership Program (WLP) inside the US Capitol building. During these seminars, I made life-long connections with motivated peers like myself and networked with public policy leaders from a variety of organizations throughout DC. I also attended fun CAPAL get-togethers and bonded with other members over activities ranging from barbeques to hiking trips. In short, CAPAL not only offered me opportunities to further my public service career goals, it also offered me a “family” away from home—an experience I will always cherish.