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Engaged learning trip moves Panetta Congressional intern

Sarah Gardner

Dominican University of California, sarah.gardner@dominican.edu

Dave Albee

Dominican University of California, dave.albee@dominican.edu

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Engaged learning trip moves Panetta Congressional intern

Samantha Hunt '18 may have landed in Washington D.C. last August to begin a Panetta Institute Congressional Internship, but it was a Dominican immersion trip to El Salvador almost two years ago that was her eye-opening moment in politics.

“The El Salvador trip certainly altered the way that I view my position in this world,” says Samantha, a junior majoring in [Political Science and International Studies](#). “Before embarking on that journey, I had studied U.S. foreign policy and its vast impact on the rest of the world. It is a completely different experience to see that impact with my own eyes.”

Samantha came to Dominican as a first generation college student. She arrived with a fascination for the foundation of law and the justice system. She was immediately mentored by Alison Howard, chair of the Political Science department, along with professors Dr. Gigi Gokcek and Dr. Christian Dean, who encouraged Samantha to apply for the [Panetta Institute for Public Policy's Congressional Internship Program](#).

Before being assigned to work in the office of Congressman Mike Thompson, a representative of California's 5th congressional district, Samantha underwent intense training at the Panetta Institute in Monterey. She attended classes and listened to lectures, including one by former U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle.

Now in its 18th year, the semester-long public service experience was created by former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Leon Panetta and his wife, Sylvia. It is considered one of the finest congressional intern programs in the nation and each year Dominican students are selected to participate.

Samantha spent 11 weeks during the fall semester in Congressman Thompson's office. Thompson is a member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. Samantha believes the experience will help her decide whether or not she will consider working in public policy or run for public office in the future.

“I hope to have a better understanding of how the interworking of government operates on a daily basis,” Samantha says. “I'm familiar with how the process works in theory, but in reality, it could be entirely different. I also hope to learn more about the salient issues plaguing our nation and whether there is current legislation being crafted to combat these issues.”

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