

National Academy of Public Administration Internship Reflection

Summer 2021

My internship with the United States Coast Guard Academy study team was incredibly rewarding, and through this internship I learned about the intricacies of public administration, I sharpened my skills as a writer and researcher, and I gained confidence in my ability to contribute to a professional working team.

The United States Coast Guard Academy study team undertook a year-long study, commissioned by Congress, into the cultural competency of the United States Coast Guard Academy and how their cultural competency could be improved. As a member of the study team, I took notes during interviews, made interview guides, reviewed documents made by other members of the team and discussed all of the above during weekly team meetings. I was also given multiple individual and collaborative research responsibilities. One such project was summarizing the Rules of Regulations of the Corps of Cadets and highlighting mentions of diversity, equity, and inclusion related topics within these regulations. My personally favorite research assignment was researching the cause of resistance to diversity, equity, and inclusion work and how this resistance can be overcome through practices and procedures empirically evidenced to be successful at increasing diversity within organizations.

Outside of the study team, as an intern for the academy there were many opportunities for professional and intellectual growth. For instance, the intern development team hosted helpful sessions on topics such as note taking, professional writing, and life after an academy internship. The interns also had “Meet a Fellow” sessions with a few of the 900+ academy fellows who are all incredibly successful professionals in public administration and adjacent fields. These sessions were all interesting in their own way, and we got to ask questions to people with backgrounds from professor to ambassador and everything in between. As an intern, I also got to virtually attend the Social Equity Leadership Conference, with panels and speakers discussing wide-ranging topics from the racial wealth gap to moving into a post-covid world.

All of these opportunities ensured that my internship with the National Academy of Public Administration was a fruitful learning experience. This internship was my first experience being a part of a professional working team, and that was an invaluable

experience which has prepared me for any of the vast majority of future careers which require productive cooperation. Moreover, my research assignments allowed me to hone my writing and researching skills, and this ability to find and synthesize information for consumption by my team will serve me well regardless of my future career path.

More than anything, as an intern for the National Academy of Public Administration I felt like I was actually contributing to the mission of the organization. I have worked with other nonprofits in the past, and often the work one does as an intern can feel like busy work, or it can feel like your contributions aren't valued. At the academy, however, it was made clear to me that I was a valued member of the study team. Furthermore, I could see the direct link between the work I was doing and the ultimate goal of the study team, a report with recommendations for the United States Coast Guard Academy on how they can improve their cultural competency. Because I felt like the work I was doing mattered, I was constantly motivated to do my best on every assignment. The academy's vision is "making government work, and work for all," and as an intern I truly felt like I was positively contributing to making this vision into a reality.