

Legislative Aides: A Description of an Undergraduate Internship Program

For all things we have to learn, before we can do them, we learn by doing them.

Aristotle

ABSTRACT

The intent of a liberal arts education is to expose students to a broad array of ideas and subject matter. Its perceived weakness involves the possible lack of preparedness for the workplace; a liberal arts education is deliberately not vocational. To bridge that divide colleges and universities, in cooperation with industry, non-profits, and the arts, have developed internships that expose well-educated students to the workplace and make college graduates more attractive to those hiring for entry-level positions. Communication majors in particular are highly valued interns within an array of media environments. This paper explores the creation of an internship for communication majors in a very unusual spot: a state legislature. The paper reveals what students have to say about their experience and how it alters the way they view democracy and politics.

Learning in the Legislature: An Experiential Learning Program

College provides the environment in which students begin to question and think through alternative methods of problem solving. College is excellent at creating critical thinkers. Consequently employers prefer to hire college graduates. Often college graduates appear to know quite a lot but are “unable to apply this knowledge in any useful or practical way” (Dilenschneider, 2001, p. 23). And that is where college experiential learning programs are most useful. It is often an experiential learning program that provides the most excitement for students; it is often where they learn differently, where theory is reinforced with real world experience, and where students learn what they might want to do with their lives after they graduate. The internship acts as a ‘laboratory’ for students to practice of what they know. And it is where businesses identify their own future leaders.

History of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning has always held an important place in society. The Guilds of the European Middle Ages are perhaps the best example of how young people prepared themselves for careers in stonemasonry, carpentry, as well as scribing. Women might not have served as apprentices outside their parents’ home, but they certainly learned at their mother’s knee how to sew, weave, mend and cook; their internship/apprenticeship prepared them for their place in society as wives and mothers. We took this model of apprenticeship and moved it into the American school system, and it became an important part of secondary education. That’s what ‘shop’ and ‘home economics’ was all about. Remember?

Experiential learning wasn’t part of the early development of university education, however. University students weren’t supposed to become ‘blue-collar’ workers; they were destined to be lawyers and Wall Street executives, physicians, small business owners, and entrepreneurs. And for that you needed a university education,

which would include philosophy, classics, and history. Yes, there was “experiential learning” for these future professionals, but that usually took place after college, not in college. The origins of experiential learning as we understand it today only go back about 100 years with the educational principles of John Dewey (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2005).

Today experiential learning, i.e., internships, holds an important place in college education. What is an internship? Although there seem to be about 147 definitions of service learning (Kendall, 1990), I am going to use the following definition for the purposes of this paper: a ‘carefully monitored work experience where a student has intentional goals and activity which reflects on their learning experience’ (1) Often internships are paid, but sometimes they are not. Whether or not a student was paid for an internship seems not to matter when employers are looking to hire recent graduates (students insist this is critically important, but the data shows employers don’t care about this at all). Internships provide both student and employer an opportunity to see if there is a good fit between the organization and the potential employee.

No one knows when and where college internships began (Dobbs, 2006). However, political scientists pride themselves on being among the first to contribute to the development of a discipline-based internship program (Battistoni & Hudson, 1997, p. 1). Their umbrella organization, the American Political Science Association, was founded in 1903 and their two educational objectives included: (1) citizenship, and (2) training for careers in public service (Frantzich & Mann, 1997, p. 193). These professionals began immediately observing government at work, and their students were encouraged to obtain direct experience at government sites.

College internship programs developed over the years, first at select colleges but more recently at most colleges. All kinds of internships exist now although none of the organizations I consulted had a good handle on how many internships exist nationally. Even at the university where I have taught for the past three years staff say internship location and student enrollment shifts from one year to the next; it is difficult to keep an accurate track of them. Some years a particular internship opportunity attracts many students; perhaps the next year the same internship is not as popular.

Most communication majors take internships at newspapers, advertising, public relations agencies, non-profit organizations, city, county and state government agencies as well as radio and television stations (Alexander, 1995, p. 3, 67, 72). At these sites they may develop reports, handbooks, and brochures, write press releases, and edit other written material (Alexander, 1995, p. 72-73). But they traditionally have not assumed internships at state legislatures where they might be asked to perform similar tasks, although those opportunities have always existed as well. More on this topic as we go.

One type of internship that seems extremely popular and highly competitive for college students across the U.S. is the Washington Internship Program. There seems to be nothing else quite like it. In the 1960’s and 1970’s colleges developed Washington Internship programs where students could work within the various departments of Congress as well as federal government offices. (Frantzich and Mann, p. 195-96). Often college faculties are assigned to Washington, D.C. so that their own students have college mentors with whom they can consult on a regular basis. Students in these programs range from political science majors to mass communication majors. This is the one internship

opportunity that seems strong, long-lasting, and available to a multitude of social sciences majors. (See: <http://www.washingtoninternship.com>)

Experiential Learning/Internship Accountability

Over the years it became necessary to coordinate, at least as much as possible, the character of the internship programs mushrooming across America. So by February 1924 the first placement organization in the United States was founded in Chicago (NACE, 2007). Interestingly, 11 of the 12 people who started this organization were women, perhaps because the first ‘placement’ they managed was student placements in primary and secondary schools.

In 1956 the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) was established. Today it is the leading source of information on the employment of college graduates. NACE forecasts trends in the job market as well as business hiring practices. That’s important because students need to understand what the labor market looks for from them, and employers need to understand what students are learning. NACE routinely queries government, business, and non-profits to determine the continued relationship between internships and hiring practices. It always seems to turn out to be enormously important. And communication skills may themselves pave the way to employment (Alexander, 1997, p. 13, 47).

Forty years ago the CEIA (Cooperative Education and Internship Association) was formed and today edits the Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships. Its mission is to promote cooperative education and internships as premier models of work integrated learning.

In 1971 the NSEE (National Society for Experiential Education) was founded on the premise that experiential learning throughout our educational system will have a positive impact on the degree to which our citizens assume civic and social responsibility.

According to the most recent research conducted by NACE:
(<http://www.nacweb.org/press/current.asp>):

- 30% of recent hires come from the organization’s internship program. In fact, 53% of interns within these organizations become full-time hires. (This information applies to the students who come from the class of 2005, which is the most recent data available).
- 62.5 % of new college hires have had an internship experience.
- Employers routinely pay new hires that have had an internship experience more than they pay new hires without any experiential learning. In fact, on average, 46.2% of employers pay an additional 6.8% for students with internship experience.
- Most employers (84.4%) who responded to the NACE survey said retention rates for new hires with **any** internship experience exceeded retention rates for students without such experience. Equally interesting is the recent research which shows students majoring in one field, e.g., business can thrive with an internship in a completely different field, e.g., non-profits (Rehling, 2000).

Sometimes overlooked, but equally as important as those rewards that have already been listed, are the indirect rewards organizations and students reap through internship programs. Internship programs can help an organization promote its own visibility, increase brand awareness, provide an alluring presence on campus, and give organizations an opportunity to ‘test’ students before hiring them. In addition, when students have multiple opportunities to apply what they learned in the classroom to a real job it influences their attitudes toward civic engagement (Fall, 2006); civic engagement is promoting quality of life in a community, often through political processes (Ehrlich, 2000, vi).

Experiential Learning/Internships: How to Develop Them

Now that it is clear why organizations, whether they are for-profit, non-profit, or governmental, should invest time and expertise to establish internships, what are the basic steps to start such a program? According to NACE, employers should first do the following:

1. Clarify the internship program’s purpose for the organization
2. Offer real, meaningful work for the interns
3. Use the organization’s best people as recruiters and mentors
4. Create opportunities for the interns to interact with key players across the organization
5. Give interns the experience of working closely for the company, allowing them to get an honest feel for how the company operates
6. Provide honest and frequent feedback to students on how they are doing in the program
7. Use past interns to promote the organization on campus

Campuses need to promote internships by:

1. Marketing the data on how internships directly lead to jobs (see above statistics from NACE)
2. Invest in financial mechanisms that provide supplementary payment to students whose internships either do not pay at all or pay a minimal amount
3. Designate staff throughout the university, and in every department, to mentor students who are taking an internship off campus
4. Develop a close and cooperative relationship between designated faculty overseeing students’ academic learning with on-site staff mentoring students during their experiential learning. Coordination between the academic branch and the on-site staff is critical to students’ learning and retention
5. Campus staff must see the job site and review job tasks
6. Provide a confidential mechanism for students to evaluate the job site, and take that information into consideration before placing more students at that location

Experiential Learning: Why Should Interns be at State Capitals?

So if there are so many internship programs out there, and if we know how to operate them well, why start a new type of internship? And why, of all places, put college

communication majors in state legislatures? Aren't there sufficient political science majors to hold all the legislator internship slots? These are important questions, and ones we need to think about, not just as educators but as American citizens too.

The reason all of this is so important is because most students, and, let's be honest, most of the public at large too, don't think about public policy and how legislators and congress men and women pass the laws that make it possible to run our country. Recent opinion polls, and they are quoted everywhere from newspapers to regional and national magazines, consistently shows that the majority of Americans are not only deeply dissatisfied with politics and government, but also with the very people they elect to run our political parties. "Ask almost anybody in the street about the nature of American government, and he or she will describe it as something that belongs to somebody else, as a 'them' not an 'us' " (Lapham, 1990, p. 53). In fact, half of those with only a high school degree ever talk about politics, and only 10% with a post-graduate degree discuss politics with friends or family (Walman, 2001, p. 161). What is worse is that this has been going on for decades. Lazarsfeld and Merton in 1948 suggested that the endless supply by the media of political information makes people 'feel' involved while they do nothing to 'be' involved (Hart, 1997, 9).

Robert Putnam, in his popular book, Bowling Alone, demonstrated that social bonds are weakening within our society in no small part because people have lost faith in their institutions (Putman, 2000). What I believe that means is that the majority of our citizens are not engaged in thinking about the rules that govern our democracy, they expect legislators and congressmen to handle that 'stuff'. Since most people aren't thinking about or taking responsibility for these things, we turn to legislators as our public voice.

Most of us concentrate our energies on learning how to operate business and non-profits, how to start them, how to grow them, and how to make money working in them. Students are fascinated by this too and thus most of our internships are in places just like these.

But how are we preparing the next generation to take over at legislators or congress people? Where are they getting their training? And how are we preparing more of the general population to understand even how government works so that they might be informed citizens? And if we don't have informed citizens but just a handful of federal and state elected officers making the laws, how will our democracy survive? John Dewey in 1927 said, "no government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interests of the few" (Lippmann, 1927, p. 208). Not everyone agrees with that, but many educators today are thinking about how prepared our students are to engage themselves in public debate on public policy.

I would suggest that one way we might tackle this problem is to expose more students to the nuts and bolts of how government works. Research shows that internships/experiential learning increases students' awareness of their community and helps change stereotypical beliefs (Gray, et. al, 1998; Fall, 2006). Communication majors are a wonderful group of young people to engage in this process; many of the skills we teach them can be put to immediate use in a state legislative setting(see *Framework for the Program* immediately below for a listing of those specific skills). And since I have

been teaching communication majors I decided to start with what I had plenty of: undergraduate students in Communication Studies.

Framework for the Program

The decision was made to operate this internship only during the regular legislative session. Like many other states, Colorado has a part time legislature and is constricted by law to operate within a 120 days per year period. The legislative session runs from January till May. Although office personnel work throughout the year and the state capitol is open year-round, legislators don't meet in committees and formal sessions during that time. Because the intent of this internship is to expose students to the legislators, their committee meetings, and the process of bill enactment, having students at the state capitol other than when the legislature is in session would not benefit their learning.

An ongoing part of this program was to create conversational spaces for the praxis between reflection and action. One intention was to give students a regular opportunity to talk about what they were experiencing at the job site, i.e., the state legislature. Thus, the other major decision was to operate this as a joint on-site/seminar program. Students were allowed to select assignment to the offices of either senators or representatives or to the communication offices for the Republicans or Democrats. Their hours were negotiated with their 'boss', who was sometimes the legislator himself/herself, but often their chief of staff. Students were exposed to an array of different learning opportunities, everything from attending and compiling a record of the proceedings of hearings and committee meetings, to attending citizen rallies, to researching proposed bills, to writing press releases and letters to constituents, and even occasionally answering phone calls.

The seminars were held at the university and all students were required to attend. The seminars each had a specific topic presented by a professor whose experience encompassed government, legal, or political work. The seminar topics centered on common communication issues and good communication skills which students observed at the legislature: verbal and nonverbal communication, small-group processes, organizational communication, argumentation and persuasion, power and influence, civic engagement, ethics, interpersonal communication, interviewing, public speaking, political communication and gendered communication. Also included in seminar discussions was the use of hedges, tag questions, adjective and adverb qualifiers, and interruption as technique for attainment of dominance, abstract language and use of non-standard speech for emphasis.

Students were expected to keep a weekly diary and complete a 10-page final paper dealing with a specific issue of communication, covering theory and practice as seen on site. Students were graded by their 'boss' at the legislature and by the faculty who managed the program and who read their diaries and graded their papers. Contracts between the university and student were signed outlining credits earned. Credits earned depended upon hours contracted for at the legislature; credits earned varied from one credit to 6 credit hours. Expectations for seminar attendance and final papers were the same for all students except for graduate students whose final papers were to be twice the length required of undergraduate students.

Marketing the Internship

Presentations of the proposed internship were made at staff meetings along with memos detailing types of students eligible, expectations of students, and requirements for legislators accepting our students. At the same time legislators came to campus and talked with groups of students considering internships at the state capitol. Legislative staff and I both sent out e-mails to department staff highlighting advantages of student placements at the legislature. The class syllabus was made available to interested students. Professors who would be teaching the seminars attended communication classes to discuss this program. And after the first successful year of the program, student interns also attended communication classes to tell other students about their experiences. Student interns also wrote letters of endorsement which were distributed to others interested in the program. Samples of all this material are in the **Appendix**.

Results: Student Outcomes

Service learning is highly idiosyncratic and perhaps that is one reason most fields of study have not given sufficient attention to service-learning tied to outcomes (Burr, 2005/06). It is difficult to judge outcomes when the end product doesn't look anything like final exam test scores, which are frequently based on a student's mastering theoretical concepts. Service learning, i.e., internships, **are** the application of that learning, and as such, must be graded using different criteria.

I used Burr's model as the foundation for my design of this program's evaluation component. The final grade was based on seminar participation, student journal entries, final reflective paper, outside observer documentation, which in this case was an evaluation form completed by the legislator or their chief of staff. Attitude was studied by Beard and Morton (Winter, 1999) and found to be a good indicator of readiness and success in the internship programs.

I could also have used another indicator: job offers made to former interns. Many are offered permanent jobs at the legislature but those offers came after the completion of the semester so I did not include that data in the results section.

Seminar Participation:

Students learned quite a lot in this program. They learned the work is hard, the learning curve steep, and often legislators want their interns to hit the road running. Students learned how critical good interpersonal skills were in determining a legislator's success in getting their bills passed into law. Students witnessed the death of many good bills because the legislator could not negotiate successfully within their own party or wisely articulate his/her ideas with the people across the political aisle. Research supporting this observation date back a decade (Beard, 1997, p. 6 as reported in Beard and Morton, 1999). Students also came to understand that it was the group learning during these seminars which concretized the experience in the field. That is not surprising since Kolb discussed just that in his early work on experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Student Journal Entries:

It was several weeks into the internship experience before any of the students were able to identify the tie between communication theory and what they were taught in classes. One of the first things they noticed was verbal and nonverbal messages:

When I was little and took field trips to the Capitol, I always pictured people working there as being super traditional and who played by the rules. But I was surprised at how relaxed their mannerisms were. C.C.

Committees are fun. It is the only place where I see real policy [formation]; I get to study communication styles there. Sometimes legislators seem so uninterested; other times I am surprised at the questions they ask, showing they have in fact studied the material. M.D.

Once students began to feel comfortable with what they saw and heard, they probably relaxed a little and soon discovered that their own verbal and nonverbal messages gave legislators a message about student competence:

Today was a pretty cool day. I came in and immediately Senator [X] wanted to talk with me. He said he was going to introduce five bills during the session and if two of them passed he would consider this a successful session. He said he needed my help with the research on one of the two bills he wanted to see pass. Wow!! I get to do real work!! J.M.

Today was very interesting. I took a lot of calls today and answered questions for these constituents. When I [used to] walk around campus and was approached by people advocating for a cause they would always say that students should contact their legislator and voice their opinion. I didn't actually think people did that. They do!! B.N.

Today was terrific fun!! I came up with 'talking points' on a bill my Representative was going to discuss with other members of the Local Government Committee. Hey, I can do this stuff!!! B.W.

The committee voted in favor of the bill [for which I did the research]. After the meeting, Senator [A] congratulated me and I her. I felt like a part of a team. It was a really uplifting day. R. S.

As their courage and comfort grew, students were able to sit down with legislators and learn some of the behind-the-scenes workings at the Capitol. I could read in their journals how the sense of self-confidence was growing as they used their interviewing and listening skills, and even their argumentation and persuasion skills:

Since I am interested in Educational Policy, I decided to ask Senator [Y] some questions about the process in Colorado. How is educational policy

brought to his attention, and how is it put into play as a piece of proposed legislation? He spent two hours with me teaching me how citizens identify important issues, and how that eventually [might] result in a bill passing into law. S.A.

One of the greatest parts about my talk with Representative [B] was that I was able to argue with him. C. B.

One student was lucky to segue her personal story as a first generation immigrant into a speech made by the Speaker of the House in his efforts to gain legislative support for bills expanding educational opportunities. M.D. wrote a biographical sketch which demonstrated how her degree in communication would prepare her for a professional career. The Speaker of the House used this material to prepare his presentation before the full chamber and the TV cameras. She was thrilled.

Students had much to say in their journals about their internship by the end of the semester. Some wrote about their new skill set as evaluators of communication competence. Much of what others wrote was advice for legislators about how to be more efficient and less driven by frenzy:

I have seen quite a few people having communication problems. I am at a point now where I know how a committee will go according to who is the chairperson. Certain individuals have wonderful communication skills that they use to conduct successful committee meetings, while others have problems keeping on task and coming to conclusions. R.S.

The legislature is driven by paper. Too much paper. And papers get misplaced all the time. I would encourage any member of the legislature to set up and maintain a weekly blog so they could use it as a 'fireside chat' of the information age. Pod casts are another emerging phenomenon which could be used to directly communicate with constituents. J.N.

Final Paper:

Expectations for the final paper centered on comparing communication skills learned in the classroom with what they witnessed within the legislature. One of the goals was to have students understand that skills learned in the classroom really could be applied, and that strong skills made for strong professionals.

It is not often considered that the politics of a state legislature could go hand in hand with the study of communication...yet to be elected you have to be a good communicator. There are speeches to make, public meetings to attend and even debates to win, all of which add up to a true challenge for candidates' communication skills. Then you have to apply those same skills once you win the election. I witnessed some really poor speaking at the legislature; what happened to their campaign skills? B.N.

I will approach this assignment from the viewpoint of a speech writer. I want to look at what makes a good speech and what doesn't work? C.B.

For my paper I will review theories of verbal and nonverbal communication. Then I will specifically highlight what legislators do on the floor that holds with theory. I will then evaluate what works and what does not work in the legislator's goal of being credible.

I interviewed individual Republicans and Democrats [for my final paper] to determine their definition of democracy, civility, and ethics. It was pretty surprising to find that legislators from opposite parties would both comment that for democracy to survive it can not be a spectator sport. And even those with such different ideologies all saw ethics as doing the right thing when no one was looking, being honest with one another and treating everyone with respect. There is a shared understanding, and that is a foundational principle in communication theory. M.D.

My paper looks at team development, does it happen, when does it happen, and what are the results... and strong leaders make good team leaders. C.B.

Outside Observer Documentation:

Each legislator or their staff kept a log of weekly attendance. Although I had personal conversations with faculty from other schools who said if the faculty member was not continually present at the state capitol their students would not be there on time or leave early, I did not find this to be true with our students. In the three years of this program, only one student routinely was late for work. All other students were on time and stayed till their job was done.

At the end of the legislative session, which was also the end of the semester, legislative staff graded students on their professionalism; analysis and judgment; communication skills; planning and organization; technical skills (including writing and editing work); academic knowledge of how government operates; and initiative. On a 5-point scale with '5' serving as a marker for exceptional work, our students consistently achieved in the range of 5 to 4 ½ as a final score.

My discussions with legislators and their staff revealed their perceptions were that communication students made superior interns. This was excellent news for me because while there is little outcome data on success with students' application of classroom learning, the little that is out there shows disturbing results. One half of political science interns were not able successfully to bridge the theory discussed in the classroom with the practical experience of their internships (Moon & Schokman, 2000). This may be just as true for other students too. Thankfully it was not true of my legislative interns.

Experiential Learning: Where Do We Go From Here?

Future success of this program depends on continued faculty support and their ability to give the time and energy to promote it. New internships also take time to reach through word of mouth deep within the student body. After only one year of operation, most students knew of this internship but were unsure how to apply.

University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center were established for non-traditional students. So although their mean age is not significantly different than traditional students, their lifestyles are. Most of them work; many of them work full time and just attend school part time. Many are married and have families. Most are first-generation college students. Many were not born or raised in the United States. On-campus housing is just beginning to develop; most students live either with parents or in their own apartments often more than half an hour from campus. This translates into a population which does not often have the perceived luxury of extra time for an internship. Since these internships do not pay, many students are not financially able to participate.

The conceptual framework for this program is strong. But my suggestion would be that some changes be made: #1. Seek financial support to pay students. #2. Expand the number of seminars from 3 per semester to 2 per month. #3. Cut hours at the legislature if students can not be paid for their internship.

This type of internship has great potential for communication students. All evaluations from members of the legislature indicated communication students make exceptionally strong interns. That speaks well of our students. And if this program is successful with nontraditional students like ours, how much more successful might it be at four-year traditional colleges? Communication scholars are great public relations advocates, so let's get the word out there that our students are ready for the legislature!

There is little in the communication journals about internships, particularly as it relates to internships available in state legislatures. This is not surprising in and of itself since except for students of mass communication; legislative bodies have not been targeted as sites for their learning. Even political science literature doesn't cover the subject in their scholarly literature (Moon and Schokman, 2000); and this is indeed surprising since political scientists study the functions of government. We as communication scholars can do more, and we should. I would encourage other educators to contribute to the literature.

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Resources

Lissa Gallagher
Director, Career Services
The Career Center
University of Colorado at Denver
And Health Sciences Center
Tivoli Student Union, Suite # 260
(O) 303-556-2253
Web: careers.cudenver.edu

Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA)
4190 Highland Drive, Suite #211
Salt Lake City, Utah 84124
(800-824-0449)
(<http://www.ceiainc.org/>)

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
62 Highland Ave.
Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085
(800-544-5272)
(www.naceweb.org)

National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)
9001 Braddock Road, Suite #380
Springfield, VA 22151
(800-528-3492)
(www.nsee.org)

Washington Internship Programs
7606 16th Street, NW

Washington D.C. 20012
Phone: 202-829-5363
Email: washingtoninternships@aol.com
(<http://www.washingtoninternship.com/>)

Appendices

Appendix A:

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION INTERNSHIP AT THE STATE HOUSE

Get a unique, behind-the-scenes look at state government, politics and the news media through an internship at the **House Majority (Democrat) Communications Office, the House Minority (Republican) Communications Office, or with individual legislators.**

Requirements to Apply for Internship:

- Junior, Senior or Graduate status
- Good writing skills, self-starter, responsible to work independently as well as in teams
- Communication major or minor
- Internet skills; one space set aside for a student with web page builder software experience
- Preference given to students who have completed class in Political Communication or Theories of Leadership
- Positive attitude and able to adjust to a continually changing political environment
- One-page resume, cover letter and 5-page writing sample
- Member of the Republican Party or registered Independent if applying to the House Minority Communication Office

Experience Includes:

- 16+ hours per week at the Capital attending committee hearings and press conferences with lawmakers and prominent political figures and community leaders, writing press releases, drafting letters to constituents, preparing newsletters, researching draft bills, compiling daily news clippings, as well as filing correspondence and answering phones. Student interns are treated as entry-level staff.
- Mandatory three 2-hour seminars at the CU-Denver Communication Department to discuss communication skills including political communication, social justice, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, team building, persuasion, organizational communication., small group work, ethics, power and influence, gender relations, and diversity. These seminars will be structured to deal with questions students face and discuss skill-building students need to operate successfully in this setting.

These are unpaid internships which offer 3-credits, valuable work experience and networking opportunities that can lead to jobs within the political arena. These internships are particularly useful for students contemplating law school.

To apply for an internship:

- 1. Contact CU-Denver Internship Office (Tivoli, Room 260; 303-556-2250)**
- 2. Once paperwork completed and orientation taken at the CU-Denver Internship Office, contact the appropriate person at the State House for interview:**
 - **House Majority Communications Office: Contact Renee Sanders (Renee.Sanders@state.co.us) Phone: 303-866-5523**
 - **House Minority Communications Office: Contact either Steve Vieregg, HMC communications director at 303-866-2988 (steve.vieregg@state.co.us) or Melissa Elder, press secretary, at 303-866-2926 (melissa.elder@state.co.us).**
 - **Individual Legislators: Contact House Majority Office or House Minority Office at phone numbers listed above.**
- 3. After acceptance at the State House, contact Dr. Suzanne Stromberg at the CU-Denver Communication Office:
(Suzanne.stromberg@cudenver.edu).**

Requirements for Students Accepted as Interns:

- The legislature begins its 120-day session at the State House on January 12, 2005 and students must be available to begin work that week. An orientation session for all interns from all colleges and universities traditionally is held the beginning of the last week in January; all students are expected to attend the legislature's orientation session.
- Students must keep weekly diaries and complete a 10-page final paper
- Work at the State House 16+ hours per week
- Mandatory attendance at three 2-hour seminars to be held on:
 - February 11, 2005
 - March 4, 2005
 - April 8, 2005

Appendix B

11/8/2004

Dear Faculty and Staff:

You will find in your mailbox a colored flier on our new internship program. We will have this flier posted in the office; there are lots of extra copies of the flier for you to hand out to your students (which are on the countertop in the mailroom). We hope you will help us promote this new internship.

For several reasons we are excited about having students working at the state legislature this coming January:

1. Interns at the legislature have traditionally been political science majors. This is the first time a program is being developed specifically for our students, and highlighting communication skills necessary to succeed in the political arena.
2. For the first time in 44 years the Colorado Legislature will be controlled by the Democrats. It should be a time of enormous change. Whether Democratic legislators can dialogue constructively with the Republican minority as well as with the Republican Governor will determine the results of their legislative agenda.

There are several of us involved in putting together this effort. If you have any questions, get in touch with us:

Bonnie Orkow
Barb Walkosz
Omar Swartz
Suzanne Stromberg

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!

Appendix C:

CMMU 3939 INTERNSHIP IN COMMUNICATION
At
THE COLORADO LEGISLATURE
University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center
Department of Communication
Spring 2006

Liaison: Bonnie M. Orkow, Ph.D.
Phone: 303-322-1610 (voicemail)
E-mail: Bonnie.Orkow@comcast.net
Office Hours: By appointment
Required Text: None

Department Mission Statement:

To create a learning environment in which students develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to use communication to create a more civil and humane world. By civil and humane the department means a way of communicating that is rooted in an acceptance and appreciation of others and that involves communicating in ways that express respect for and acknowledgement of others regardless of their state in life, wealth, or lack of it, politics, religion, ethnicity, race, or any other quality.

Course Objectives and Tasks:

This course is designed to give upper-level communication students and graduate students an opportunity to practice good communication skills while serving as aides for our state's political leaders. The goal of the program is to expose students to the democratic political process, provide students the opportunity to expand their verbal and writing skills, and to provide an environment where students can learn skills needed for political leadership. Students have the opportunity to be placed with either Republican or Democrats within the House chamber. Depending on where the student is placed, they may be expected to write press releases, draft letters to constituents, compile daily news clippings, attend and take notes at legislative committee meetings, prepare newsletters, research draft bills, as well as file correspondence and answer phones.

Internship Structure:

In order to receive upper division credit or graduate credit for this internship experience, students must complete: (1) the required number of hours on site at the state legislature; (2) attend the three seminars taught by communication department staff at the University of Colorado at Denver; (3) keep a weekly journal; and (4) prepare a 10-page paper due at the end of the semester. Details about each assignment are explained below.

- (1) *On-site Requirement:* 15-18 hours per week, depending on the needs of the legislature. Each student will be assigned a professional staff member at the legislature with whom they work and to whom they report for their on-site internship. The tasks required include those outlined under **Course Objectives and Tasks**.
- (2) *UC-Denver COMM seminars:* There will be three required 2-hour seminars to be held on the Auraria campus from 9-11 AM. Site Location: Library in the Communication Department, Plaza Building #102. The seminars will be held on Friday, February 10th, Friday March 3rd, and Friday, April 7th.

Friday, February 10th seminar will be taught by Dr. Barbara Walkosz. The topic of this seminar is Deliberative Democracy. In today's hyper-mediated society, legislative processes are often illustrated by sound bytes from tenured legislators, pressure from special interest groups, and high profile legislative bargaining. As a result, the role of deliberative democracy (the reasoning on the merits of public policy) is widely ignored. In this seminar we will examine the construct of deliberative democracy with a focus on how communicative acts (argument, discussion, persuasion, and collaboration) inform legislative actions, empower and engage citizens, and intersect with public journalism; formal (floor debates) and informal legislative deliberation; and the pros and cons of the deliberative democracy movement.

Friday, March 3rd seminar will be taught by Dr. Omar Swartz. This lecture will argue that the institutional and imaginative orders of U.S. society are limited by the legal apparatuses in ways that make social justice difficult to achieve. The very legal norms that are proclaimed to be just, fair, and self-evident work in less visible ways to discourage alternative thinking about the structure of society and the feasibility of more inclusive social and economic communities.

Friday, April 7th seminar and discussion will be taught by Dr. Bonnie Orkow. Ethical behavior among politicians is viewed by many as an oxymoron. Nevertheless, the possible significant moral influence of politicians is greater than for most people because

their actions affect all members of society (state citizens) and determine public policy for decades. This seminar and discussion will explore ethical standards followed by the legislature as a group (their ethical code of conduct) as well as how the moral stands of individual legislators are mediated through personal action, interpersonal dialogue, as well as small group discussion. It will be argued that strong legislators are defined by their system of moral standards and that ethical character is a significant aspect of political communication.

- (3) **Weekly journal.** This journal is expected to reflect the personal journey students take as they learn to work within the legislative environment. Each journal entry should reflect back on the most recent work week. Plan to write your entry during or right after your week at the legislature. If you wait until the weekend you may have forgotten the most important aspects of your week. What you write is a personal reflection of your experience, the good, the bad, and the ugly. You can use the entry to discuss one dilemma you faced that week, one or two successes you had, or just use the entry as a way to ventilate your frustrations or share your insights. The journal entry should be one-two pages in length, single-spaced. Be mindful of grammar and spelling.
- (4) **Paper.** This paper is to be double-spaced and 10 pages in length. You are allowed up to 3 typing, grammatical, or punctuation errors before your grade is lowered. For each mistake over 3, your grade is lowered one-third of a letter grade (for example, your grade would decrease from an “A+” to an “A”). Content: You will analyze some aspect of your work environment from a communication perspective. You might want to use the information and discussion from the three lectures to help you clarify a subject for your paper. For example, you might want to explore interpersonal communication, first from a theoretical perspective, and then talk about what you witness among staff, the public, lobbyists, and legislators. Or you might want to do a theoretical paper on social justice, and then discuss how social justice is enacted within the legislature. Or you might want to write about ethics from a communication perspective, comparing what our own scholars say about personal and organizational ethics with how that is enacted or not enacted within your legislative work environment. **I am willing to review your draft papers up till two weeks before they are due.**

Grading:

You will be graded on the following:

- (1) **Employer’s Evaluation. I will be contacting your supervisor at the legislature on a regular basis. Their evaluation of your performance over the entire semester will be 2/5th of your grade (40%).**
- (2) **Weekly Journal. You will complete a packet of weekly journal entries. Those written during the first half of the semester should be delivered to the mailbox of the instructor by March 17th. Journals completed during the second half of the semester should be handed in May 8th by 4:00 PM. The completed journal will count for 1/5th of your grade (20%).**
- (3) **Seminar attendance and discussion will count for 1/5th of your grade (20%).**

(4) Final Papers are due in my mailbox May 9th by 4:00 PM. The paper will count for 1/5th (20%) of your grade.

Grades will be assigned using the following point scale:

A+	100-97	C-	69-68
A	96-93	D	67-65
A-	92-90	F	64 or below
B+	89-86		
B	85-82		
B-	81-79		
C+	78-77		
C	76-70		

Appendix D: TESTIMONIAL FOR LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

To Students and Faculty:

I worked as an intern for the House Majority's Director of Communications during the 2005 legislative session. I would like to share my experience of the program as I found it to be very rewarding.

Interested in the field of Public Relations, I chose this particular internship as an opportunity to gain real experience without having to sell an event that I did not believe in or even worse, spend my valuable time filing or fetching coffee. I felt the position would give me an insider's perspective as to how the state's political system functions, providing me with knowledge of what it takes to create or change public policy. I viewed the opportunity as a good way to network with individuals already in the fields of public policy and non-profit, and as a way to develop a better understanding of the individuals leading the state.

My experience as an intern at the Capitol proved to be very valuable. Our supervisor treated her interns more as entry-level staff members providing us with as much responsibility as we could handle and providing more responsibility when we had proved ready for it. I was able to gain valuable experience working in a very intense, high paced environment. Ultimately the job consisted of handling PR for every member of the House Majority. Some of my responsibilities included creating media biographies for all members of the House Majority, setting up press conferences, writing press releases and media advisories. Working on these projects gave me the opportunity to work with many legislators from the House Majority, some of whom became valuable mentors to me. I gained insight as to how and why they came about becoming State Representatives. In addition, on a daily basis, I dealt with members of the local news media, providing an opportunity to make contacts in radio, television, and newspaper. As an added bonus, the experience allowed me a better understanding of, and greater appreciation for, state government. To my surprise, my time at the Capitol left me feeling much less cynical and much more hopeful.

This internship program is an excellent opportunity for students to gain real work experience, build contacts, and develop knowledge of the legislative process. Students deciding on this internship are guaranteeing themselves a chance to directly apply their classroom knowledge while creating contacts and possibly future employment inside or

outside of the Capitol. Overall, I believe students will find this internship experience intense, challenging, and very rewarding.

Sincerely,
Maureen Daberkow

Appendix E

Legislative Internship by Randy Hildreth

As a graduate student of communication I have had a number of goals. One important goal was to strengthen my application to law schools. Another goal was to find an outlet for the theoretical education I gained in the classroom in a practical setting. When I saw that the Communication Department was offering a legislative internship at the state capital I was very excited.

I was required to submit an application, resume and go through an interview process with the legislative office to which I was applying. Part of that interview process was designed for me to decide whether or not the office would be a good fit for my career goals. In this sense the office staff was very helpful in answering my questions and painting an accurate picture of what my experience there would entail. Of particular interest to me was the underlying philosophy that interns would be treated as entry-level staff, given responsibilities and tasks, which would require attention to detail and initiative.

After I was accepted I began training on the various tasks that we would be required to fulfill as interns. The first order of business in the House Minority Communication office is to collect and compile a daily newsletter featuring articles from the states' major newspapers. The criteria for the articles are a bipartisan approach designed to inform rather than to offer or craft any kind of bias. The daily clips are a complex document broken into sections according to topic and importance. Compiling these clips has given me important experience in analyzing and judging news articles, crafting professional documents designed for mass consumption and learning about the relationship between the legislature and the news media. When my clips were finished they are distributed to the Republican caucus and various members of the local press corps.

Other responsibilities I enjoyed were researching and writing press releases. It was a great experience to write a press release and then see your words turn up in a published news story the next day. These press releases represent a significant professional experience that serve as a writing sample for your future job opportunities.

The other valuable facet of this experience was the first hand experience gained working for the state legislature. If you are looking to gain experience in a fast paced work environment with networking opportunities this internship may be for you. In conclusion, I would recommend this internship to any student looking to gain valuable experience in an exciting environment who is not afraid of hard work. If you have any other questions feel free to contact me at any time.