



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Institute Provides Training, Support and Wider View of Washington for Congressional Interns

Congressional interns from twenty-four California universities returned to their respective campuses last month brimming with praise for a program that gave them access to people and places in Washington well beyond the congressional offices where they worked for two and a half months.

In addition to gaining exposure to the legislative process, the students met with top officials in the White House and elsewhere in the executive branch, along with leading figures in journalism, government relations and policy analysis.

“It was truly inspiring to be there,” said Laura LaManna of CSU San Marcos, “and it made me realize that public service is something I will want to do for the rest of my life.”

For more than a decade, the Panetta Institute has run the congressional intern program for all the campuses of the CSU system plus Santa Clara University and Dominican University, the alma maters, respectively, of Institute founders Leon and Sylvia Panetta.

Offered during the fall semester, the internships are a superb opportunity for California students to get an inside look at the workings of the U.S. Congress and the federal government, and participants repeatedly describe the experience as life-changing.

The interns begin with an intensive two-week

course at the Institute’s Monterey Bay headquarters, with members of Congress, congressional staff, political journalists and other veterans of the Washington scene explaining how the legislative process and a congressional office operate. Then each student is assigned to work for eleven weeks in the Capitol Hill office of a member of the California congressional delegation.

To ensure that students of all backgrounds can participate, the Institute covers all program costs, including air travel and housing in Washington, DC, along with a stipend for living expenses.

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The Institute’s congressional interns, gathered here on the Capitol steps, met also this fall with the White House chief of staff and other executive branch leaders, plus public policy analysts and a top political journalist.

Institute Supporters Break Donations Record At “Evening to Honor Lives of Public Service”

Friends of the Panetta Institute set a new contribution record last month as they gathered at The Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach for the organization’s annual Jefferson-Lincoln Awards dinner.

Headlined as “An Evening to Honor Lives of Public Service,” the event this year saluted three outstanding journalists – NBC News

special correspondent Tom Brokaw, ABC News and NPR senior analyst Cokie Roberts and New York Times columnist David Brooks – each of whom voiced high praise for the Institute’s work.

Roberts called the organization’s public policy studies program “an island of civility in a sea of cacophony.” Brokaw, who noted that a tiny percentage of Americans are carrying the burden of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, echoed the Institute’s call for all citizens to show their patriotism by engaging in public service.

The dinner tradition began in 2000 as a way of honoring political leaders who reach across party lines for the good of the country, but in recent years it has also honored journalists who maintain their objectivity in an increasingly reckless and partisan media environment.

In her introduction of the honorees, Institute director Sylvia Panetta said, “These three individuals inspire balanced discourse and display a constant commitment to the truth.”



Dinner honorees David Brooks of the New York Times, Cokie Roberts of ABC News and NBC News special correspondent Tom Brokaw with Sylvia Panetta.

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Interns Gain Wide Exposure to Washington

“We’re committed to making this opportunity available to students of modest means,” says Institute director Sylvia Panetta. “Many of these interns are the first person in their family to get to college.”

Among the highlights for this year’s students was a meeting in the White House with newly appointed interim chief of staff Pete Rouse, who spoke about the various challenges facing the Obama administration.

The interns also met at the Central Intelligence Agency with CIA director Leon Panetta. The former Monterey congressman co-founded the Panetta Institute with his wife

Sylvia in 1997 after serving as chief of staff in the Clinton White House.

For an inside look at political journalism and the 2010 campaign, the students met with the highly respected Wall Street Journal correspondent Jackie Calmes. And Norm Mineta, who served as secretary of transportation during the George W. Bush administration, shared insights on ensuring safe travel in an era of international terrorism.

Each intern sent weekly reports back to the Institute and wrote a final term paper based on the Washington experience.



Reading Assistance Effort Reaches More Kids As More Groups Agree to Participate

The Institute-directed program that has helped thousands of area children learn to read made important new strides this year by expanding volunteer recruitment and adding more participant schools.

“The response from our local communities continues to amaze us,” says Sylvia Panetta, who has spearheaded the effort known as Monterey County Reads (MCR) since its founding in 1997. The program, she says, is in keeping with the Institute’s mission of promoting public service.

MCR staff members recruit, train and place reading volunteers in the county’s elementary schools, where they work one-to-one with children in early elementary grades who are having trouble with their reading.

Along with the Monterey County Office of Education and participating school districts, dozens of area colleges, businesses, hospitals, military installations, government offices, faith groups and community organizations have joined in support of the effort.

More Participants. This year brought the addition of Fremont Elementary School in east Salinas to the program, and also the Gonzales Unified School District. Meanwhile, more community groups have stepped forward to provide volunteer help.

In Salinas, for example, the First Baptist Church has adopted a school and a “foster grandparents” organization is sending volunteers to another. Elsewhere around the county, the program has attracted the help of all manner of groups, from sororities to service clubs to local police.

“The willingness of police officers to get involved in this should come as no surprise.” says Officer Pablo Andrade of the Marina Police Department. “Giving our children the



Under the Panetta Institute’s direction, Monterey County Reads volunteers work one-to-one with children who need help with their reading.

skills they need to succeed has longstanding benefits to the community.”

High Praise. With more than 125 volunteers now engaged in the effort, praise for Monterey County Reads keeps rolling in. “It’s so rewarding to work with these kids,” says reading volunteer Nanci Perocchi. “As their reading skills grow, you can see their confidence growing too.”

And T’Nesia Jones-Hurley, director of elementary learning services for the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, says the MCR partnership “helps our schools, our families and our community.”

To learn how you can help, call 831-582-4200.

“MCR HELPS
OUR SCHOOLS,
OUR FAMILIES
AND OUR
COMMUNITY.”

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The Panetta Institute seeks to inspire men and women to lives of public service and helps them develop the skills they'll need. Please help us continue our mission with your tax deductible contribution.

Research Fellows Help Institute Fulfill Mission While Expanding Their Knowledge and Skills

Over the past five years, the Panetta Institute has gained critical support for its program work from some very bright and dedicated students from nearby law schools.

The Institute launched its Policy Research Fellows program in 2006 in cooperation with the Santa Clara University School of Law, where Institute co-founder Leon Panetta received his law degree more than four decades ago. The effort was later expanded to include students from the Monterey College of Law.

Each of the carefully selected upper-division students spends a semester at the Institute essentially on call to the Institute's director, teachers and program leaders, conducting research on a wide variety of issues.

For the Institute's annual lecture series, the Policy Research Fellows help compile background material on each lecture topic which is made available to participating schools.

All lecture series speakers meet with students from area high schools, colleges and military installations in addition to the series subscribers, and the Fellows-generated briefing materials help these students ask more informed questions and get more out of the experience.

The Fellows also lend their ideas as the Institute prepares its annual nationwide



The Institute's programs get important help from a team of talented law students.

survey of college students. The survey, conducted for the Institute each April by a top national polling firm, measures students' views on a broad range of issues along with their level of interest in public service.

The Fellows help alert the pollsters to current campus concerns while also gaining insights into the techniques of opinion research.

"Our fellows help us," says Institute director Sylvia Panetta, "and we help them, with exposure to issues and development of skills that can advance their public service careers."