

Elise Herrig
State of Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate
Hartford, CT
Class of 2010

The organization:

The State of Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate functions to evaluate, review, and recommend changes to facilities, procedures and policies of agencies that provide services to children. It acts as a resource for children through discovering how services best be administered through the state, and reviewing policies which affect them. They also can investigate and issue recommendations following the death or critical harm of a child.

The OCA does not answer to another office and can therefore independently conduct reviews of state policies and facilities and issue recommendations. It is one of few in the country, and reviews many state funded institutions such as prisons and juvenile detention centers, as well as participating in public education, attorney training, and acting as a resource for children and families navigating state systems.

The internship:

During the summer, the office will primarily be involved in reviewing two facilities, the Riverview Hospital, a state-administered psychiatric hospital for children, and the York Correctional Institution, Connecticut's only prison for women. It will also conduct reviews of group homes, mental health facilities, and juvenile detention centers. They will also continue researching girls-at-risk and female incarceration to gain understanding about how girls who experience care in the Department of Children and Families can be stably supported within the system.

I'll be incorporated into the office as another member. Although I'll have a supervisor, I'll interact with and shadow multiple staff members depending on the current demand. I'll also conduct research and provide summaries if needed by the office. I'll accompany staff members during facility visits and participate in facility reviews.

Most of my work as an intern will be autonomous, such as conducting research on a particular population affected by a government system or policy. I'll also have the opportunity to formulate and execute research on a subject area of my choosing in order to deepen the office's understanding within an under-researched area.

How it fits with my career goals:

I am interested in pursuing a career in social work, specifically involving systems that effect children. In the past three years, I have been involved with two programs that respond to children's needs and directly interact with children -- Even Start in Middletown which offers early childhood learning in partnership with adult education and parenting classes and Camp to Belong in Massachusetts which reunites youth who experience foster or adoptive care with their siblings for a week of family oriented summer camp. I've seen the effects of government regulations and recommendations, and how families access services and are impacted through policy. These projects provided examples of innovative ways programs can benefit a community, and the positive results of collaboration between different organizations, individuals and state offices, combined with research, and policy making.

The perspective I lack is how programs such as these are designed, executed, reviewed, and reformed. Working with a government office will give me the opportunity to understand how it's done. The OCA acts as a mediator between the children receiving the services and the offices creating the services, which is a very different perspective than I have previously received. My past experiences focus on implementing programs and interacting with people within a pre-constructed framework. The specific nature of the Office of the Child Advocate is different in that it seeks to review and refine those very frameworks.

It is rare that an internship with a government office allows an undergraduate to be so directly involved in their work. However, I'll be able to conduct research and perform tasks without constant and direct supervision. I've been encouraged to design a research question related to my own areas of interest. I've discussed the possibility of exploring whether sexual orientation influences incarcerated women's experiences and access to services, a

question directly related to my personal interests as an activist and related to my Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major.

It will be an incredible opportunity to work with an office that allows for such personal interest under a common cause of providing for children's welfare. The office respects and gives responsibility to interns and provides them with a space to learn and engage in the office. It is an entirely new way for me to engage with children; moving from the role of a camp counselor and teacher's aide, to someone who can receive feedback from and advocating for children as part of a government office.

Jiun Kimm
The District of Columbia Public Schools, Office of the Chancellor
Urban Education Leaders Intern
Washington, D.C.
Class of 2010

The organization:

The District of Columbia Public Schools Office of the Chancellor Urban Education Leaders Internship Program (UELIP) is an intensive multidisciplinary academic internship program that was established in 2008 under Chancellor Michelle Rhee. The program hires top undergraduate and graduate students from various disciplines including business, public policy, law and education to work as Associates in the D.C. public schools office. The goal of the program is to expose Associates to critical educational reform issues of the day, introduce them to issues in managing an urban school system, and provide networking opportunities with leaders in education and government. The UELIP program is for students who have a passion for the plight of the urban poor and who believe that the key to providing children with a better future exists through a quality education.

The internship:

As a Summer Associate, I'll be assigned to any of ten project areas. I applied to work in either the Teaching and Learning Project or the Office of the General Counsel.

In the Teaching and Learning Project, I would help restructure the Office of Bilingual Education, coordinate Saturday school, and plan the launch of special projects including Geoplunge and Hispanic Forum.

As a member of the Office of the General Counsel, I would participate in research and policy work surrounding various issues including the challenges presented in the Mayor's takeover of the public school, the impact of charter schools on public education, and the importance of union rights versus that of personal accountability. I would present my research on these issues to administration officials and meet with local leaders to help draft reform plans for new projects.

In addition, Associates perform on-site visits with students and teachers to see firsthand how new policies are working.

How it fits with my career goals:

In 1980, my father, a South Korean immigrant, came to the United States to attend graduate school at the University of Oklahoma. He began a new life here with my mother and with nothing but his education supporting him, my father strived to build a life of opportunity for the family he hoped to one day raise in this new country. My father always tells me that his education is the reason why our family is blessed with the life we have today, and he instilled in me the belief that a good education is the key to my aspirations.

Beginning in eighth grade, I participated in an after-school tutoring program for children at a local middle school. I continued as a tutor through high school and began to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of education. I had tutored many of the same kids for four years and really began to see the effects of the school's failure to stress basic reading, writing, and math skills.

It wasn't until my junior year of high school that I discovered my true passion, education reform. My school had been failing to meet state standards required by federal legislation in No Child Left Behind. As a result, many dramatic changes were made in my high school, and I witnessed the power of education reform firsthand as successful strategies were enacted to ultimately save my school from the hands of the state.

While the reform that occurred in my high school was minor compared to the incredible level of reform that must be enacted in D.C., I can definitely see the parallels. I believe very strongly in the reform methods of the UELIP because I saw these methods succeed in a microcosmic level at my own school.

At Wesleyan, I have taken advantage of courses pertaining to public policymaking. Coursework in classes like Economic Analysis and the Law and American Political Economy has reinforced my vision of a career in educational policy.

D.C. public schools are known to be some of the worst in the country but with a new, progressive administration under Chancellor Rhee, people are seeing hope on the horizon. *The New York Times* (March 21, 2009) recently called Chancellor Rhee's district "Education's Ground Zero," as public schools nationwide are looking to model their own changes after the reform taking place in D.C. An internship with UELIP offers a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Ultimately I would like to attend law school and specialize in Educational Law and Policy, and an experience like that which UELIP offers is my first real step in that direction.

Arielle Knight
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective
Atlanta, GA
Class of 2011

The organization:

SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective is a network of local, regional and national grassroots agencies representing five primary ethnic populations/indigenous nations in the United States. The organization works to educate women of color and policy makers on reproductive and sexual health and rights, and to work towards access to health services, information and resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Through public policy work, advocacy, service delivery and health education within communities on the local, national and international levels, SisterSong seeks to influence public engagement and support of issues surrounding reproductive health as well as implement programs that will address these issues.

The internship:

As Program Intern, I'll be working closely with the development coordinator and the national coordinator on several projects. One is the planning of a regional summit to be held in Atlanta during the fall in coordination with the National Institute for Reproductive Health. My duties may include researching the work of local agencies throughout the south to involve in the symposium, initiating contact with various groups, and staying up-to-date on the public policy issues that may be relevant in creating the national agenda.

I can also get involved with one of SisterSong's ongoing locally based projects. I am interested in working with their research and public policy initiatives aimed at helping to rescind the restrictive policies to accessing reproductive healthcare put in place by the Bush administration.

I am hoping to use this internship to begin developing my senior thesis project. I am interested in using SisterSong's work with reproductive justice and communities of color to develop a more focused area of study for my academic work.

How it fits with my career goals:

I discovered my intellectual curiosity for reproductive justice in my freshman year at Wesleyan, in a class entitled Reproduction in the 21st Century.

I was most interested in areas dealing with law, policy and women's bodies. I had never seriously considered the many ways in which the law regulated the governance of my own female body. I found myself researching surrogacy laws, Plan B emergency contraceptive, male birth control and a myriad of topics previously foreign to me. The surprising thing about the area of reproductive health was the fact that there existed such a vast range of disparity in terms of law and policy.

I wondered who was making the decisions about reproductive health and why they seemed to vary so much state-to-state. I had always considered myself to be pro-choice on the issue of abortion, but up until that point, I had never truly questioned my right to be educated about my body, my right to make informed decisions about my body, or the ways in which my identity as a black woman from a working class background could severely limit my access to reproductive healthcare and education.

My time at Wesleyan has served to increase my personal and academic pursuit of the politics of marginalized identities along racial and gendered lines. As an African American Studies and Feminist, Gender, Sexuality Studies Double Major I have been able to take classes that allow me to explore the ways in which identity intersects with the law and policy. I feel at times that the work of academia can become disconnected from the important work that is being done by activist and advocacy group and I am constantly looking for opportunities to bridge the gap.

In the future, I see myself attending law school in order to have a grasp of the legal system as a means of beginning to repair from within the many fractures I see in the way policy is created and implemented. A summer internship with SisterSong will give me an opportunity to use my research and analytical skills developed through my course work in a

substantive and concrete way. I believe that it will be a door-opening opportunity to begin learning how to effectively influence the decisions that affect women everyday. I hope to use my Wesleyan education and my experiences as an intern in the field of reproductive health as the building blocks of a dynamic and influential career in the field of women's rights.

Allison Quantz
MADRE
New York, NY
Class of 2010

The organization:

MADRE is an international women's human rights organization that works toward a world in which all people enjoy the fullest range of individual and collective human rights, and are able to participate effectively in all aspects of society. Using a human rights-based approach to advance social justice, MADRE partners with women in communities worldwide to meet urgent, local needs and create long-term solutions to the problems that women face. MADRE works in three broad program areas, including: Peace Building; Women's Health and Combating Violence Against Women; and Economic and Environmental Justice.

The internship:

Because MADRE is a small-organization I will have responsibilities throughout the office. However, I will be a development intern, working specifically with the Development Coordinator. I will focus on grant research, writing grant letters of inquiry and applications. I will also work on major and minor donor programs, updating the donor database, running direct fundraising campaigns, and maintaining intensive contact with major donors. I'll also be expected to create and run extensive outreach campaigns in order to create a larger donor base.

How it fits with my career goals:

MADRE is one of the most well-known international human rights organizations in the world and is at the very forefront in the field of international women's rights. I will have the opportunity to work in development and fundraising, learning the skills that are crucial to my career goals. I can work full-time on difficult skill sets like grant writing and major donor outreach.

MADRE works internationally rather than domestically. It is crucial to have experience working with a global organization before stepping into that job market. My background and interest lies in international community development, in particular using a rights-based approach that seeks to provide all people with access to resources and the autonomy to improve their own lives.

MADRE's commitment to working with community partnerships will allow me to work with a non-profit practicing what is largely considered to be the most effective form of international development. MADRE's mission matches closely with my interests, while this particular development internship will be invaluable in my career path.