

2017 Summer Fellows Testimonials



Sam Alhadeff, University of Wisconsin-Madison '18
Intern at J.A. Green & Company

Over this summer, I interned at a boutique lobbying firm called J.A. Green & Company, which specializes in defense acquisitions and rare earth metals. As an intern in a small office, I was afforded the opportunity to work on several client profiles across a variety of tasks. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been making its way through the legislature this summer, so a majority of my work revolved around tracking the progress of the legislation and the amount of funding and authorizations specific item lines received. A highlight of my summer came at the end of June when I stayed at the office past midnight to track debate on the NDAA in the House Armed Services Committee. Everyone in the office's schedule revolved almost exclusively around progress on the bill, following the adoption of amendments and sending updates to the Jeff Green, the company's owner and a registered lobbyist, on the Hill. At 12:30 AM when he finally returned to the office, he asked me to draft his talking points for an appearance on SiriusXM the next morning. That experience and more gave me a much deeper insight into the legislative process and how lobbyists interact with legislators. Working there, I also developed a social media plan for the office and even wrote Jeff Green's Wikipedia page to be published on the site. Throughout the summer, I also took advantage of being in DC and attended several events and committee hearings to learn more from the wealth of experts living in this city.

None of this would have been possible if it had not been for the assistance of the AHS fellowship. I started my accelerated graduate degree this summer and needed to take a summer course to graduate on time. With the combined cost of living expenses in DC and the summer course, I would not have been able to afford what I was able to accomplish this summer. The amount I learned in my workplace, in the classroom, and in interacting with the nation's capital has prepared me better for my career than any other experience thus far. The fellowship itself was incredibly enjoyable and informative as well. For a long time, I had wanted to attend Gettysburg and experience the historic event in US history. The opportunity to go on a staff ride, take on the persona of a commander in the battle, and learn from my peers and the leaders of the trip was the best way to experience Gettysburg.

Most importantly, AHS has been the most transformative experience of my academic career. From being invited to the Leadership Conference in 2014 to founding and leading Wisconsin's chapter for three straight years, I have learned an exceptional amount about leadership, communication, and our nation's place in global affairs. Prior to AHS, my foreign policy knowledge was minimal but learning from expert speakers on the salient issues of today has expanded my worldview, challenged my beliefs, and taught me an immense amount.



Marea Hurson, University of Notre Dame '19
Intern at the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business

This summer I interned at the House Committee on Small Business in the U.S. House of Representatives as an AHS Summer Fellow. The exposure that I received to Washington, both through my internship and through the Alexander Hamilton Society, allowed me to see so many opportunities and career paths this great town offers.

My work with the House Small Business Committee allowed me to familiarize myself with the legislative process, in some ways that I had expected and in others I hadn't anticipated. I had looked forward to doing policy research to assist staffers, and I did get to complete some of this, as I researched VERA and VSIP (Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment) guidelines for the policy staffers to use in a Small Business Administration Oversight Hearing. Another great opportunity I was afforded was to be present at just about all of our committee's hearings, where I really saw how House Committees operate. It's quite rare for every congressman on a given committee to be present at a hearing and even rarer for all to be present at once. They are all so overcommitted, being a member of one, two, or even three different committees who could all be holding hearings at the same time, and this besides their duties to be present in the gallery for votes. I was a bit frustrated by this, as I watched congressmen step into a hearing in the middle of it, ask questions of the witnesses written by the committee staffers, and then leave without ever having heard the testimony of the witnesses or the other questions asked. I can see why people are so frustrated with our government.

I was also able to attend hearings held by other committees while the house was in session, which I did almost daily. Most often, these were held by the House Foreign Affairs Committee or one of its respective subcommittees, but I also attended Appropriations Committee Hearings, Armed Services Committee Hearings, various The Fund for American Studies lectures, and Capitol Hill Intern Lecture Series lectures. These hearings and lectures were my favorite part of being on the hill this summer. I got to meet Secretary of Defense Mattis and watch him defend the DoD budget to the House Armed Services Committee, say 'hello' to Secretary of State Tillerson, watch Secretary of the Treasury Mnuchin testify, and watch Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley defend her budget to the House Appropriations Committee. I was very fortunate to have this level of exposure to the cabinet and administration, and I gained a deep appreciation and admiration especially for both Ambassador Haley and Secretary Mattis.

AHS not only made this experience possible, through the grants I received as a Summer Fellow, but AHS provided more events and thought provoking talks that related to my internship, and allowed me to create a network of colleagues and friends with similar interests, who will all likely land up in careers in Washington. The panels that I attended during the leadership conference, as well as the dinner book talk event, gave me plenty of ideas to draw on for events for my chapter.

I am grateful and humbled by the opportunities I have been granted this summer by AHS, and I look forward to continued activity in the ND chapter and AHS national.



Matthew Taylor King, Duke University '18
Intern at the National Endowment for Democracy

It was a sober time to work at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Fourteen years have passed since the vaunted “third wave” of democratization peaked in 2003. Since then, democracy has begun to retreat across the world, including in once-dependable American allies like Poland, Turkey, and the Philippines. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region closest to my heart, strongmen have reversed the gains of the 1990s, making a mockery of multiparty democracy as they co-opt and crush the political opposition. Russian election interference, rising political polarization and the increasing atomization of our society have all made our own democracy more fragile.

Working as a research assistant to Professor Donald L. Horowitz this summer, I poured over dozens of peace agreements, learning more about the difficulties of building democracy in deeply divided societies—especially in countries emerging from years of conflict. To help Professor Horowitz revise the third chapter of his forthcoming book on constitutional design in deeply divided societies, I created an original database of peace agreements containing consociational (power-sharing) measures from 1989 to 2015. Along the way, I made a discovery: only a few of the peace agreements were intended to last longer than two years. Most were stopgap measures aimed at patching up a country and fastening a tenuous peace until elections could be held or constitutional reforms passed. Only about a third of these temporary agreements ever reached completion, and even then, in a few cases, civil war resumed. With this information, Professor Horowitz was able to restructure the chapter, a major milestone toward the completion of his book.

I would not have been able to accept this unpaid internship without the generous support of the Alexander Hamilton Society. But my internship at NED was not the only summer highlight that AHS made possible. Throughout my summer, AHS was a constant source of inspiration, advice, and intellectual enrichment.

For one, happy hour events and book talks (including one with Tom Wright of Brookings) expanded my peer network; I found myself running into friends I had made at AHS events in DC throughout the summer, as I’m sure will continue to happen throughout my career. Also of import this summer was the AHS Student Leadership Conference. It was wonderful to meet smart, driven students from across the country. AHS students are invariably thoughtful, willing to engage with opposing views and eager to forge connections with their peers. Panel discussions allowed us to learn more about vital issues, such as trade policy, and receive advice for our careers.

Although I am not an AHS chapter officer at Duke University, I will support Duke’s AHS chapter as best I can this year—not only through attendance at events, but also by mentoring younger students. I’ve seen the power of mentorship in my own life; Gabriel Scheinmann and Cherise Britt were extraordinarily helpful in their meetings with me this summer. I am grateful for their sage counsel at a time when I am trying to determine my next steps, and I am eager to pass along the lessons I’ve learned to younger students. In a larger sense, I am grateful to the entire AHS organization for all the ways it has supported, challenged, guided, and helped to launch me in the work that matters most to me. Thank you.



Caitlin McMahon, George Washington University '19
Intern at Women in International Security

The Alexander Hamilton Society's Summer Fellows program provided me with the financial ability to obtain my role as a Program Assistant at Women in International Security (WIIS), an incredibly valuable experience, both educationally as well as professionally. At WIIS, the premier organization in the world dedicated to advancing the leadership and professional development of women in the field of international peace and security, I have worked primarily on the organization's upcoming Next Generation Symposium. The symposium gathers 25 M.A. and PhD student from across the globe to examine international security challenges from a gender perspective, a critical, yet often overlooked, component of international relations. From a pool of nearly 400 applicants, the selected participants represent the best and brightest rising professionals in the fields of gender, peace, and security, ensuring effective exchange of best practices after the symposium's conclusion. This summer, I have primarily worked on promoting the symposium, creating unbiased selection criteria, selecting qualified participants, and presently, planning the event's extensive agenda and budget. From participating in discussions with policymakers and government officials to engaging in a collaborative research project, attendees will return to their home nations with an enhanced understanding of the important gendered nuances of international peace and security.

Furthermore, my summer and fall internship with WIIS allows me to pursue my goal of publishing findings regarding the intersection of gender, peace, and security. In the fall, I plan to publish my report on Boko Haram's seemingly hypocritical duality regarding the organization's derogatory view of women and subsequent use of female suicide bombers. The organization views suicide bombers as highly respected "martyrs" and allows women to fill this role, making Nigeria the country with the most female suicide bomber attacks in the world. Still, Boko Haram follows a misogynistic interpretation of Islamic Shari'a, illustrated by the kidnapping of the 276 Chibok girls, and uses rape as a weapon of war.

Without the financial support of the Alexander Hamilton Society and their Summer Fellows program, the professional and academic growth I achieved this summer would never have been possible. My AHS scholarship allowed me to dedicate myself completely to intensive research, networking opportunities, and event planning, experiences which have largely impacted my future goals and my ability to reach them; I will forever be grateful for this support. Staying in DC and experiencing the Alexander Hamilton Society's programming this summer has helped me to better understand what I can offer back to this incredible network. As Vice President of the AHS chapter at The George Washington University, I feel that the society's summer programming has increasingly prepared me for my new role to engage our organization's expanding presence on campus. I am confident that the AHS Summer Fellowship and programming will help me create a more informed student body at GWU.



Rachel Sereix, Duke University '19
Intern in the Office of Representative Charlie Crist (D-FL)

This summer, I served as a legislative intern for Congressman Charlie Crist. As part of my internship, I wrote memoranda for the Congressman primarily regarding fiscal, environmental, and foreign policy issues. With regards to financial oversight, I wrote memos and letters regarding issues such as the Dodd Frank Act, the Consumer Protection Financial Bureau, and the FY 2018 Budget Cuts. One of the main issues I conducted research on was Medicare and Medicaid policy and how it affects seniors and veterans within the Congressman's constituency. I also advised on Carbon Fee and Dividend Policy, aquaculture utilization, and the SNAP program.

With regards to foreign policy issues, I wrote memos and letters regarding Iranian nuclear policy, Israeli and Palestinian relations, and diplomacy efforts. Throughout my internship, I was tasked with identifying key legislative issues and completing research-based tasks. As part of my internship, I also took notes on constituent calls and entered claims through the Fireside database. My fellowship assisted me with my internship by allowing me to expand my knowledge of how foreign policy is reflected in nearly every branch of government.

At the Student Leadership Conference, it was eye-opening to hear speakers discuss how their zeal for foreign policy acted as a segue into careers at the National Security Council, the foreign service, the Armed Services Committee, and so forth. The Student Leadership Conference also allowed me to meet other chapter presidents from across the nation who are in various stages of development with their own chapters. Coming from a chapter that had been developed long before I even entered college, I was previously unfamiliar with the chartering process and the difficulties associated with entering what is often an already crowded landscape of policy-oriented campus organizations.

Being a part of the Alexander Hamilton Society has granted me the opportunity to meet so many influential lawmakers and foreign policy advisors who always implore me to do more, research more, and know more about foreign relations. For me, the most poignant AHS event I participated in was a debate regarding whether Russia is the United States' main geopolitical rival. I moderated the debate which was between Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Dr. Jack Matlock, and Professor of International Affairs at the Eliot School at George Washington University, Dr. Henry Nau. I discussed the role that military negotiations can play in mitigating or worsening tensions between the United States and Russia and additionally asked the speakers about how Russian occupation of Ukraine can shape policy. I am proud to be the president of the Duke chapter and look forward to the many ways in which I can heighten the level of discourse that students, faculty, and visiting speakers continue to have while on our campus.