

Dominican Panetta Institute Congressional interns reunite

Juleah Cordi '14, Sydney Lewis '13, Daniela Leyva '13, Caitlin Verby '10, Melroy Atkins '05 and Molly Starr '01 attended the lecture. Darcel Sanders '09 and Kathleen Skiles '07 were also invited. They were all students in [Dominican's Department of Political Science and International Studies](#).

Founder and chairman of the Panetta Institute for Public Policy, Secretary Panetta discussed his new book, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace*. The event was in partnership with Book Passage.

The Panetta Institute Congressional Internship Program has had a profound impact on Dominican students who have participated in it. Sydney Lewis, who currently works as a staff assistant in U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer's Sacramento office, and Daniela Leyva, who is in the casework office in Senator Boxer's Oakland office, credit their experience in the program for laying the groundwork for their new roles.

"It changed my life. I wish to continue working in public service because of the Panetta Institute. I don't think there is anything more fulfilling than helping my community and the Panetta's definitely showed me that," says Daniela, who interned for Congresswoman Doris Matsui.

"I feel between my classes at Dominican and my time at the Panetta Institute that I was well-prepared for this job because of the training I was provided," says Sydney, who in 2012 worked in the Washington D.C. office of Congressman Sam Farr.

"The guest speakers that visited gave us a good idea of what to expect of the Washington atmosphere, and all of the professors at the Panetta Institute offered a solid training in how to behave in a congressional office and acted as a strong support system for all of the interns. I was placed in an office where I was encouraged to take on tasks and seek out ways to help in the office, and the staff was incredibly forthcoming with information about my areas of interest ... Having that background, in addition to a second internship in Congressman Jared Huffman's office a year later, definitely provided me with qualities and congressional knowledge to which most Californians are not exposed. I'm so grateful for my time at the Panetta Institute because I gained once-in-a-lifetime, unforgettable experiences that have allowed me to pursue a career in my chosen field."

Juleah Cordi, who also interned in Congressman Farr's office, attended graduate school at CSU Chico where she earned her Masters of Public Administration. Her participation the Panetta program while at Dominican was invaluable.

"I have always had a passion for agriculture and an interest in agricultural policy. Having studied federal agricultural while at Dominican, I knew I wanted to work in a field related to agricultural policy," Juleah says. "While in D.C., I had an opportunity to work on and/or attend committee hearing on pieces of legislation that dealt with food and agriculture. This additional experience with agricultural policy, solidified my desire to work with and in support of the agricultural community."

Juleah is now District Manager of the Sutter County Resource Conservation District.

Molly Starr, who interned for Congresswoman Grace Napolitano and later worked in Congressman Lynn Woolsey's district office and was a lobbyist in Sacramento, is now in her eighth year as a high school teacher teaching AP United States History and AP U.S. Government and Politics.

"My Panetta Institute experience totally changed my career path," Molly says. "About five years later I came to the realization that I could do the most good in the classroom. I wanted to instill in students a desire for public service and the importance of participation in the process."

Through the Panetta Institute Congressional Internship Program, Caitlin Vejby interned with Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Melroy Atkins interned for Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, Darcel Sanders interned for Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Kathleen Skiles interned for Congresswoman Jackie Speier.

Skiles now works for Nancy Pelosi as senior advisor and digital director, Sanders is a legislative aide in Sacramento for the Chair of the California Senate Education Committee, and Vejby is pursuing her Masters degree in Global Studies at UC-Santa Barbara.

"The Panetta Institute internship experience furthered my interest in global human studies and reinforced my desire to pursue a career in public service," Caitlin says..

Interns are nominated for the Leon and Sylvia Panetta Institute Congressional Internship Program by presidents of 23 California State University campuses, as well as Dominican and Santa Clara University. This is the 16th year that Dominican has participated in the program.