2018 AAPD Summer Internship Program Annual Report

17 Years of Internships Powered by Disability Inclusion
A Message from the President & CEO

Dear Friends:

I am proud to share with you our annual report on the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) Summer Internship Program, now through its 17th year. As one of AAPD’s flagship programs, this opportunity provides high-level internships to students with disabilities in Washington, DC. We experienced exciting growth to the program this year, expanding from 15 interns in 2017 to 27 in 2018. We also added a new component to the program this year – in partnership with The George Washington University Semester in Washington Program, AAPD offered a Disability Advocacy Certificate Program for all interns.

Year after year, AAPD continues to witness the power of this program and the impact that it has not only on the students who participate, but also their employers and mentors. Former AAPD Summer Interns have found success across the country, working in the White House, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, government, and more. This year was no exception. In 2018, one intern received and accepted an offer for full-time employment from her internship placement while several others found employment opportunities as a result of their AAPD internship.

As we reflect on 2018, we want to extend our gratitude to our partners, employers, mentors, volunteers, and the community for their commitment to the AAPD Summer Internship Program. On behalf of the AAPD Board of Directors and staff, thank you for your support. We look forward to working with you and to continued success in 2019 and beyond!

Sincerely,

Helena Berger
President & CEO
American Association of People with Disabilities
Table of Contents

A Message from the President & CEO ........................................................................................................ 1
About the AAPD Summer Internship Program .......................................................................................... 3
2018 Interns ................................................................................................................................................. 4
Preparing the Next Generation .................................................................................................................. 166
Disability Advocacy Certificate Program ................................................................................................. 177
Professional Development and Networking ............................................................................................... 199
Disability Power & Pride ............................................................................................................................. 200
2018 Placements .......................................................................................................................................... 211
2018 Supervisor Testimonial ..................................................................................................................... 222
2018 Mentors .............................................................................................................................................. 233
2018 Mentor Testimonials .......................................................................................................................... 244
2018 Summer Internship Program Demographics ...................................................................................... 255
2018 Partners ............................................................................................................................................ 2627
2018 Intern Testimonials ............................................................................................................................. 2828
Alumni Reflections ...................................................................................................................................... 3030
Alumni Spotlight ........................................................................................................................................ 3232
Alumni Testimonials ................................................................................................................................. 323
Thank you for your support! ......................................................................................................................... 354

AAPD’s Mission
The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities.

As a national cross-disability rights organization, AAPD advocates for full civil rights for the over 56 million Americans with disabilities by promoting equal opportunity, economic power, independent living, and political participation.
About the AAPD Summer Internship Program

The AAPD Summer Internship Program provides the opportunity for students with disabilities to gain hands-on professional experience and advance their career goals. Through the Summer Internship Program, AAPD seeks to give a class of students with disabilities the skills, resources, and networks they need to not only become employed, but to be employed in meaningful and high-level positions. Our Summer Internship Program engages students and recent graduates with disabilities from all across the United States. Because we cover the costs of travel and housing in addition to providing a living stipend, we are able to recruit a diverse class of interns that may not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in a program like ours. For many of these young people, participating in AAPD’s Summer Internship Program provides their first exposure to the broader disability community, which empowers them to become self-advocates and sets them on a path to employment.

17 years of providing successful internship experiences to students with disabilities

Over 300 interns have furthered their careers through the AAPD Summer Internship Program

600+ colleges and universities in AAPD’s network

The premier leadership development opportunity for students with disabilities

In addition to placing interns on Capitol Hill, in government agencies, with national nonprofit organizations, or in the private sector, AAPD also matches each intern with a mentor connected to the disability community. The AAPD Summer Internship Program is unique and effective because we offer a comprehensive experience that goes beyond the normal 9-to-5 intern work week. Outside of the internship hours, AAPD educates our interns on the history of the disability rights movement and the challenges our community still faces today. The interns also have numerous opportunities to participate in social and professional networking events.
2018 Interns

Nathan Altmann
Placed with Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

Nathan Altmann is entering his final semester at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire in the fall of 2018 to finish his studies in Political Science, Legal Studies, and Philosophy. Nathan’s academic pursuits have earned him positions as a McNair Scholar and Undergraduate Research Fellow as well as an academic apprenticeship. He currently researches in conjunction with faculty members from the Center for Constitutional Studies where he examines 14th Amendment protections for people with disabilities. Apart from his scholarly pursuits, Nathan has led the effort to transform university vehicles and facilities to better accommodate people with disabilities, founded an intersectional organization to address the needs of students of marginalized identities, and served on numerous local committees related to the needs of people with disabilities. Nathan also advises local progressive candidates with outreach strategies to campus communities. After graduation, Nathan hopes to return home to Madison, Wisconsin to attend law school and continue fighting for progressive values.

Elijah Armstrong
Placed with Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)

After facing extreme discrimination in high school, Elijah began his work in advocacy. He is committed to making sure students understand the laws protecting their civil rights. As part of that commitment, he started a nonprofit called Equal Opportunities for Students. One of the organization’s goals is informing and empowering students, families, and community leaders to counter discrimination. Participation in Equal Opportunities for Students stretches from Rhode Island to California. Elijah has worked directly with policy advisers to President Obama, the U.S. Department of Education, and New York City Public Schools advocating student rights. He has also presented at the International Disability Studies conference, Columbia University, and to the New York City Department of Education’s Inclusion Division. Elijah is a senior at Penn State University’s University Park campus, studying Education and Public Policy.
Benard Bampoh  
*Placed with American Airlines*

Benard N.K. Bampoh studies Computer Science at the University of Maryland, College Park. He finds it very rewarding to solve a problem with wit and the speed of a computer. Though the power of computing continues to amaze him, he has other hobbies as well. Benard enjoys drawing, crocheting, and playing the piano. When he is not in school, Benard is at church with his parents. Those are the few places he tends to spend the most time. It is a simple way to live. The simplicity gives Benard time to think about life. One observation worth sharing is this: always let your friends outnumber your enemies—that is the secret to success in life.

Maya Branch  
*Placed with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)*

In pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Human Development & Community Engagement with a concentration in Childhood Mental Health, Maya continuously demonstrates a keen interest in education policy, advocacy, and social work. This theme of creating equity can particularly be seen in her working with Mikva Challenge DC, taking on a summer project with Whitman Walker, interning and volunteering at the Smithsonian, hosting a workshop at GirlsRockDC!, working at the Center for Social Policy & Community Development in Philly, and beyond. Considering she loves writing as much as advocacy, Maya has also had the privilege of speaking at several conferences including The National Conference on Citizenship; The National Conference on Social Studies; Every Student, Every Day; and the Pearson Action Civics Conference. Themes of her work during such projects include destigmatizing mental illness, alleviating truancy through educational and policy reform, ensuring equal rights for the LGBT+ community, research, and empowering disenfranchised communities through civic engagement. After her undergraduate years, she hopes to continue her studies by obtaining a Masters in Social Work and traveling the world.

Chris Damon-Cronmiller  
*Placed with Senator Ed Markey (D-MA)*

Chris Damon-Cronmiller is a dual-degree MPA/MA-IR student at Syracuse University who graduated in May of 2018. Originally from Newton, MA, he received a BA in Politics and International Studies from Fairfield University in 2013. Chris has been heavily involved in disability rights and advocacy for several years, and is very interested in bringing disability to the forefront of legislative and policy agendas in the U.S. and abroad. He also briefly interned at the U.S. Department of State, and served as a healthcare liaison at St. Martin’s Hospitality Center in Albuquerque for one year through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.
Courtney Dignan

Placed with the American Council of the Blind

Courtney Dignan is a junior at The College of New Jersey. She is a double major in Elementary Education and Women and Gender Studies. Her professional goal is to teach in an elementary school for a number of years and return to school to receive her masters in School Administration. Eventually she hopes to become a principal in an urban elementary school. She feels incredibly passionate about public school funding. Courtney loves sports and athletics. At school, she is an involved member of the club lacrosse team. Courtney also is involved in an elementary tutoring program, and is a member of the National Sorority Sigma Sigma Sigma.

Danielle Drazen

Placed with the Institute for Educational Leadership

Danielle Nicole Drazen received her BS in American Studies from Charter Oak State College, where she graduated magna cum laude. She is currently in the MS program in Special Education with an area of specialization in Assistive Technology at Southern Connecticut State University where she received her Initial Certification in Special Education. She is currently working as a special education teacher with focus on helping students with disabilities transition to adulthood. She serves students with exceptionalities including but not limited to learning disabilities, autism, ADHD, emotional disturbance, TBI, communication disorders, and physical challenges. In her role, she serves as advisor to the school’s Student Government, Committee Chairperson for Field Day, Committee Member for Arts Fest, and enjoys mentoring new teachers. Her colleagues remark on her super power, which is getting others to do things they did not know they wanted to do. Danielle is a member of the Alpha Sigma Lambda Honors Society, Council for Exceptional Children, and Connecticut Transition Community of Practice Assistive Technology Focus Group. She recently traveled to Guatemala to volunteer and complete an international field study focusing on special education in a developing country with attention to policies, availability, accessibility, professional development, and the impact of culture. In her spare time, Danielle has volunteered as a Puppy Raiser for Canine Companions for Independence since 2010 and is currently raising her 7th assistance dog. She is also an avid board game enthusiast and serves as an event coordinator for multiple clubs in Connecticut.
Morgan Dunnigan
*Placed with the Information Technology Industry Council*

Morgan Dunnigan is a sophomore at Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina, where she plans to major in Economics. Morgan is an attorney on the Davidson mock trial team, sings in the Davidson Singers choir, and is involved in campus religious life. She is a spirited disability advocate for herself and others, especially in educational environments.

Shoshana Finkel
*Placed with Centene Corporation*

Shoshana Finkel is an undergraduate student at Brandeis University in Waltham, MA, majoring in Health: Science, Society, and Policy, and minoring in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. Originally from Bergen County, New Jersey, Shoshana is passionate about disability advocacy and inclusion. On many weekends out of the month, she volunteers with the New England chapter of Yachad, the National Jewish Council for Disabilities, as a peer advisor and social coordinator for young adults with disabilities. She is also the event director of the Brandeis community rooftop farm, where she facilitates events to teach students how to grow their own produce and educate about food justice, and is the music director of an a cappella group. With what little free time she has left, Shoshana enjoys playing the ukulele, cooking, and exploring the great outdoors. She hopes to pursue a career in public health and empower others to take control of their wellness.

Adam Fishbein
*Placed with the National Center for Learning Disabilities*

Adam Fishbein is in his second year as a Politics, Policy and Law Three-Year Scholar at American University, where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, Law, Economics, and Government. Adam ultimately wants to start a career in disability advocacy and policy. His interest in disability advocacy stems from his own mental health and learning challenges. Adam has worked as a Public Policy and Employment Fellow at RespectAbility, as an intern for Pennsylvania State Senator Art Haywood, and as an intern for the nonprofit Jewish Learning Venture, where he worked closely with the director of the Whole Community Inclusion program to refine and promote its work on disability advocacy. Adam is especially interested in advancing public policy related to disability rights, particularly education and employment policy.
Eiryn Griest Schwartzman
*Placed with the Equal Rights Center*

Eiryn Griest Schwartzman is a 20-year-old disability and LGBTQ rights activist pursuing a degree in Public Health with a strong interest in medical ethics and public policy. As a teenager in 2014, Eiryn founded The Literal Heart, a community organization for the support and empowerment of chronically ill, disabled, and neurodivergent young adults. Since that time, Eiryn has been heavily involved in community organizing and been a guest at the White House for disability advocacy. Eiryn has successfully lobbied for rare disease and disability rights organizations and for legislation on medical research, health care innovation, community living, and civil rights. Eiryn also frequents protests and actions on Capitol Hill.

Cecilia Grugan
*Placed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

Cecilia Grugan recently completed her last semester at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio in the Student Affairs Higher Education graduate program. She has completed three internships thus far in the field of higher education. In addition, Cecilia performed a two-year graduate assistantship stint as an Assistant Community Director with Residence Life and Housing at Wright State while a student there. While in the graduate program, Cecilia did an independent study by authoring a master’s thesis that focuses on a concept called universal design. As a native of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, Cecilia received her undergraduate degree in Individualized Studies (Communications, Psychology, Women & Gender Studies, and Creative Writing) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, New York. After embracing an identity as a Deaf person at RIT, Cecilia has developed countless dreams that include advocacy work, diversity initiatives, and inspirational contributions to the community around her. While learning more about how to advocate for fellow individuals in the disability community and implementing ways of universal design in her work and community, Cecilia aspires to become a published novelist and caregiver of children in the foster care system.
Andrew Hart
*Placed with the U.S. Department of Energy*

Andrew Hart is a graduate of Fresno Pacific University, where he studied Philosophy and Communication. He was an editor on his university’s student-run newspaper, *The Syrinx*, where he has won several awards at the ACP Midwinter National Journalism Convention and has also presented on Title IX exemptions and implications. Through his university’s Model United Nations delegation, he served as head delegate and the designated Student Senate representative, where he worked with fellow students within the international community at the Harvard National Model United Nations each year. Having Tourette’s since he was five years old and being confident with his quirky personality led to becoming a strong leader with an uplifting spirit and positive mentality. He developed a passion for social justice and fostering a dialogue between himself and others. In his free time, you can find him watching Netflix with his cat Janice, listening to electronic music, or heading to music festivals.

Luanjiao Aggie Hu
*Placed with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities*

Luanjiao Aggie Hu is currently pursuing a PhD in International Education Policy at the University of Maryland, College Park. As a person with a physical disability originally from China, her expertise and research interests are in disability, gender, and education for people with disabilities. A 2017 Disability Research Consortium summer fellow in Washington, DC, Aggie has conducted and published research on education for people with disabilities in China. She has also been teaching disability issues at the University of Maryland since 2015. Beyond graduate studies, Aggie serves as a frequent guest speaker sharing her research on disability at universities in the United States and China. She was an invited speaker for the TEDx Maryland conference and gave a talk on disability and education in 2015. Aggie is a dedicated lifelong student, scholar, educator, and practitioner aiming to push for a more inclusive society for people with disabilities.
Megan Lambert
Placed with the National Disability Rights Network

Megan Lambert is a rising Junior at the University of California, Merced with a major in Anthropology. She was diagnosed as autistic in the 5th grade, but truly began to discover her identity when she was 14. Since then, she has been very passionate about autistic and disability rights. At university, she runs a disability club and coordinates a disability campaign. In the future, she hopes to continue the work she does now and help to empower disabled people everywhere. Outside of her disability work, she is passionate about petting cats, playing video games badly, and listening to podcasts at all hours of the day.

Angelique Long
Placed with Families USA

Angelique Long is a senior at University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC), where she is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Healing and Humanities. Before transferring to UMKC, she was able to study Child Health and Understanding Autism. She has been a member of numerous campus organizations including Pi Gamma Mu, an international honor society in social sciences. Last year, Angelique worked as a peer mentor for the UMKC Propel program, a certified two-year transition program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disorders. She also volunteered at her local children’s hospital, where she had the opportunity to play with children on an inpatient unit. After completing her undergraduate degree, Angelique hopes to continue her education in pediatric health psychology. Eventually, she would like to work with kids with chronic illnesses, helping them cope with the added stressors their illnesses may bring. Her own history of lifelong chronic illnesses has given her a unique ability to help this population that others may not have. When not working or studying, Angelique likes to read. She can almost always be found in a library, either studying or enjoying a wide variety of fiction. She also likes to spend time with her family; spoiling her nephew has become her favorite pastime.
Sarah Mays
*Placed with the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities*

Sarah is a Senior at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is majoring in Psychology. Sarah was a Behavioral Therapist at the Healing Haven, a behavioral and holistic services provider for families of children with disabilities. While at the Haven, she utilized applied behavior analysis while working one-on-one with children to help them improve their social, communication, emotional, scholastic, and self-care. Her previous two summers were spent at the University of Michigan alumni camp, Camp Michigania. At Michigania Sarah supervised childcare/management for over 30 children from ages ranging from infancy to six years old. Sarah also created a Picture Exchange Communication System (P.E.C.S.) and cared/aided a teen on the autism spectrum during their time at camp. Sarah recently completed a thesis on managerial employment positions for adults with ASD. Sarah also worked as a research assistant in a lab studying the effectiveness of teach the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) in a group setting. This role had Sarah in direct care implementing the ESDM approaches as well as doing coding and aiding in assessments. She also works part time as a caregiver for a ten-year-old girl with a corpus callosum split, as a caregiver helping in life skills and as a playmate role model. Sarah is currently working on a literature review on ASD and joint attention and is in the hypothesis creation process of an honors thesis with her psychology mentor in research lab.

Johileny Meran
*Placed with the National Disability Rights Network*

Johileny Meran is a Dominican immigrant who moved to New York at age 8 with her mother for medical treatment for cerebral palsy. During her public school education, her family lived in a shelter. Nonetheless, she used this obstacle as fuel to power forward. Johileny graduated as valedictorian of her high school and earned several scholarships. Currently she is a junior at NYU’s College of Arts and Science majoring in Global Public Health/Sociology. Johileny often describes her leadership role on campus as President of the Disability Student Union as one she stumbled across while searching for a disability community on campus. Her leadership beliefs are based on integrity, quality, and service. Johileny enjoys rock climbing, scuba diving, sled hockey, tennis, track, basketball, writing poetry, and sharing her motivational story.
Lydia Parenteau
*Placed with the U.S. Department of Energy*

Lydia Parenteau is a law student at Syracuse University College of Law. She earned a BA in Sociology with a minor in Asian Studies at Western Michigan University. Once Lydia graduates from law school, she plans to take the bar exam, then working in Washington, DC for the federal government. Her main work interests are in national security, cyber security, and cybercrimes. In her free time Lydia likes to read science fiction novels, build computers, and study Japanese.

Shiven Patel
*Placed with American Airlines*

Shiven Patel completed his BBA in Supply Chain Management with a minor in Management at the University of Houston – Downtown in December 2016. Upon graduation, he immediately started law school at the South Texas College of Law in Houston. He went to law school knowing that he wanted to become a public servant and obtain the skills necessary to become a better advocate for the disability community. During his undergraduate career, he gained experience in public service by volunteering at homeless shelters in the Houston area. Since starting law school, he took an internship opportunity with the office of the Harris County Attorney, where he represented the citizens of the State of Texas in public nuisance lawsuits to protect the community from illegal activity. In his spare time, he enjoys watching and playing basketball, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.

Sarah Patnaude
*Placed with the Feminist Majority Foundation*

Sarah Patnaude is a current graduate student pursuing her Masters of Social Work (MSW) at George Mason University. Having studied Criminal Justice and Psychology in undergrad, Sarah is interested in using her MSW to become a victim advocate in the court system. Her love for advocacy stems from her active involvement in the National Federation of the Blind, where she has had the opportunity to serve in numerous leadership roles on the state level. Sarah loves traveling, having visited six countries including Italy, Netherlands, and Belgium. In addition, Sarah enjoys exploring her creative side through photography, painting, and cosplaying.
María Pereira
Placed with the Office of Disability Employment Policy

María Antonella Pereira is a rising senior at Barnard College majoring in Political Economics and minoring in Latin American Studies while completing the Athena Scholars Program on women’s leadership and entrepreneurship. For the last two years, María has been heavily involved in housing relief initiatives surrounding the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador. Through these experiences, especially as board member of the nonprofit Fundación Raíz, she has come to a deep understanding and interest in post-disaster urban development. She has tied this interest to disability advocacy, which she relates to at a personal level due to her own experiences navigating life as a person with severe hearing loss. María spent the Spring 2018 semester interning at the department of planning and development of the Ecuadorian Federation of People with Physical Disabilities (FENEDIF), where she learned from and supported the administration and evaluation of projects such as the construction of inclusive villages for low-income people with disabilities displaced by natural disasters. Through her personal, professional, and academic experiences, María has honed her project administration and research skills, which she intends to use as she aspires to a career in development and public policy. In her free time, María learns Portuguese, writes in Spanish and English, paints, and dances Flamenco.

Laura Power
Placed with the United Spinal Association

Laura graduated summa cum laude from Edinboro University in May 2017 with a BA in Sociology and a minor in Biology. While at Edinboro, Laura was a four-year member of the Student Government Association, co-President of Delta Alpha Pi (Beta program), President of the Sociology Club, a member of the National Society for Leadership and Success, and the recipient of the Outstanding Sociological Award Service Award. In addition to her academic work, Laura has volunteered with the Red Cross on their Pillowcase Project (Disaster Preparedness Campaign), the University of Pittsburgh’s Bioengineering Summer Camp program, and the Carnegie Library’s Summer Reading Extravaganza. Additionally, she participates in the Pittsburgh Junior Sports Clinic on a monthly basis. Laura is interested in pursuing a master’s degree in Public Health and recently completed the GRE. She is currently engaged in advocacy work through the Pittsburgh Consumer Health Coalition’s Health Committee for People with Disabilities. On a personal note, Laura enjoys working out at the gym, loves yoga, and is a voracious reader.
Abeeha Shamshad

Placed with The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Abeeha Shamshad is a Junior at The Ohio State University, where she studies Public Management, Leadership, and Policy at the John Glenn College of Public Affairs. Originally hailing from the Bay Area, Abeeha is a sister of Kappa Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc. She has a passion for intergovernmental and political communications, campaign operations, and public relations. She has had the distinct privilege of working in various governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and is continually excited to learn more about what role she can play in the future of public engagement. Abeeha is a dedicated San Francisco Giants and San Jose Sharks fan, and studies linguistic revitalization and forensic anthropology in her spare time. She is a proud Pakistani, and enjoyed sharing her cuisine with her fellow interns.

Ellie Stitzer

Placed with the Administration for Community Living

Ellie Stitzer is from Columbia, Missouri and attends the University of Missouri, where she studies Health Sciences with an emphasis in Leadership and Policy. She passionate about improving how people with disabilities are treated within the health care system. Ellie is involved with many organizations at her school that advocate for students with disabilities, such as Mizzou Unity Coalition and the Chancellor’s Committee for Persons with Disabilities. Ellie’s involvement has given her the ability to work with others on campus improvement projects and educate students, staff, and faculty. She is also a policy intern at Services for Independent Living in Columbia. In her free time, Ellie loves to read, watch movies, and go to concerts.

Kurt Vogel

Placed with the U.S. Access Board

Kurt Vogel is a rising fourth year at Georgia Tech’s Expanding Career, Education and Leadership Opportunities (Excel) Program, a program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). He hopes to leave there with a position in IT that allows him to help other people. He is interested in doing work that will allow him to use technology to improve the lives of people with disabilities. He completed a traineeship program in the Georgia Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (GaLEND) Program. He worked with Georgia House Representative Scott Hilton to help get a law passed that would adopt more respectful and dignifying terminology to describe people with disabilities. He has also served as a research assistant at Georgia Tech’s Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA).
Adam Webber

Placed with House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Adam Webber began his life with cerebral palsy, but at age 20, he began experiencing difficulty walking. By age 25, Adam was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. His situation forced him to determine, at an early age, that what one really needs in life is a sound mind and a willing heart, and that life is not about what you are but who you are. Adam was unwilling to give up on his dreams and goals. Because of his experiences, Adam has created a life of service helping others find their own voice and their own strength. Even before he began his college experience, Adam became active as a disabled advocate. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “If I can conceive it, I can achieve it.” Adam currently attend California State University – Stanislaus majoring in Political Science. His long-term goal is to become a civil rights lawyer. In the meantime, Adam tirelessly works to protect those with disabilities and advocate for better enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Preparing the Next Generation

Below is a sample of the workshops and guest speakers organized during the interns’ Orientation.

- **History of the Disability Rights Movement**, Patrick Cokley, Disability Policy Engagement Manager, Anthem
- **Screening of Lives Worth Living**
- **Group discussion of Enabling Acts: The Hidden Story of how the Americans with Disabilities Act Gave the Largest US Minority Its Rights**
- **Careers in Public Policy Panel**, Dexter Brooks, Associate Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Kim Musheno, Vice President of Public Policy, Autism Society of America; Rachel Snyder, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer; and Will Ris, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, American Airlines (retired)
- **Introduction to ABLE Accounts**, Heather Sachs, National Down Syndrome Congress
- **Workplace Accommodations and Disclosure Training**, Lou Orslene, Co-Director, Job Accommodation Network
- **AAPD Summer Internship Program Alumni Panel**, Jasmin Bailey, Class of 2013; Erika Hudson, Class of 2017; Ola Ojewumi, Class of 2011; and Meredith Raymond, Class of 2013
- **Networking Discussion**, Derek Shields, Co-Chair, National Disability Mentoring Coalition
- **Introduction to the National Council on Independent Living**, Sarah Blahovec, Disability Vote Organizer; Cara Liebowitz, Development Coordinator; and Hindley Williams, Youth Transitions Fellow

2018 AAPD Summer Intern Sarah Mays poses for a photograph with Senator Bob Casey (D-PA).
Disability Advocacy Certificate Program
For the first time in 2018, AAPD partnered with the George Washington University to offer a Disability Advocacy Certificate Program for all summer interns. This program took the form of two weekly classes: one on U.S. electoral and legislative processes (taught by GWU professor Rob Engel) and one on disability advocacy (featuring presentations by subject matter experts across various issue areas).

Topics for the electoral and legislative processes class included how the legislative process works, the mood of the American electorate, elements of a political campaign, the role of counties in the political process, how to advocate with your legislator, the role and strength of political parties, and the 2018 midterm elections. Our interns made visits to the National Association of Counties, Capitol Hill, and both the Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee headquarters.

Topics for the disability advocacy class were based on a poll of the interns and included how to be a disability policy change agent, building an intersectional coalition in advocacy work, technology, education, ADA protection and enforcement, healthcare, and employment.
Speakers for our disability advocacy class included:

- **Bobby Silverstein**, Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville PC
- **Allyn Brooks-LaSure**, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- **Keri Gray**, Disability:IN, AAPD Board
- **Samantha Davis**, YWCA USA
- **Mia Ives-Rublee**, Women’s March Disability Caucus
- **Victoria Rodriguez-Roldan**, National LGBTQ Task Force
- **Susan Diegelman**, AT&T, AAPD Board
- **Linda Vandeloop**, AT&T
- **Will Schell**, Federal Communications Commission
- **Nicole Dooley**, NAACP
- **Susan McMenamin**, The George Washington University
- **Adaku Onyeka-Crawford**, National Women’s Law Center
- **Denise Rozell**, Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- **Diane Smith Howard**, National Disability Rights Network
- **Heather Ansley**, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- **Tony Coehlo**, former House Majority Whip
- **Jasey Cardenas**, United Spinal Association

The Disability Advocacy Certificate Program introduced an academic element to our existing program and ultimately enabled our interns to become stronger, better-informed advocates.

**AAPD Interns participate in a class session on intersectionality.**

- **Rebecca Cokley**, Center for American Progress
- **Joe Musker**, Centene Corporation
- **Michael Gamel-McCormick**, Office of Senator Bob Casey
- **Judy Heumann**, Ford Foundation
- **Isabel Hodge**, U.S. International Council on Disabilities
- **Jennifer Sheehy**, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- **Amanda LaHaie**, American Airlines

**AAPD Interns with Tony Coehlo, former House Majority Whip.**
Professional Development and Networking

One of the hallmarks of the AAPD Summer Internship Program is the number of opportunities that interns have to engage in professional development and networking. These range from intimate conversations with icons of the disability rights movement to panels with Washington, DC’s top public policy professionals. In addition to the professional development aspect of the curriculum, events are also focused on strengthening disability identity while encouraging disability pride. This year’s programming included:

- **Workforce Recruitment Program and Schedule A Hiring Initiative Briefing**, Frances Vhay and Lauren Karas, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor
- **Career Development Meeting with Bender Consulting Services**, Joyce Bender and Mary Brougher, Bender Consulting Services
- **Constituent Coffee with Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)**
- **Meeting with 2018 Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award Winner Emily Ladau** and **Ramp Your Voice! founder Vilissa Thompson**
- **Deloitte Career Development Event**
- **Meeting with the Microsoft Technology Center in Reston, VA**
Disability Power & Pride

For many AAPD interns, the AAPD Summer Internship Program marked their first time in a group of youth with all types of disabilities, their first time in a room with youth that identified positively with their status as people with disabilities, and their first time experiencing real-time educational and professional success from disclosing their own disability.

This year’s activities focused on disability power and pride included:

- **Tour of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Memorial** with longtime disability rights advocate (and former AAPD staff member) Jim Dickson

- **Meeting with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)**, where she delivered remarks and answered questions from the intern class

- **National Council on Independent Living Annual Conference**

- **National Council on Independent Living March & Rally at the Capitol**
2018 Placements

- Administration for Community Living
- American Airlines
- American Council of the Blind
- Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- Centene Corporation
- United States Department of Energy
- Equal Rights Center
- Families USA
- Feminist Majority Foundation
- Institute for Educational Leadership
- Information Technology Industry Council
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- National Disability Rights Network
2018 Supervisor Testimonial

“We were extremely fortunate to have had Lydia Parenteau join our team as an AAPD intern here at DOE this summer. She was an invaluable member of our team and we would have kept her here if we had the option. Lydia jumped right in and began seeking out online training that would better enable her to integrate into our team, and when she left, she was probably more knowledgeable on some topics than our full-time employees. It is always good for our full-time employees to have AAPD interns and employees because it enables us to realize how important it is to have a diverse workforce and recognize the value all people bring to a team.”

Greg Sisson
U.S. Department of Energy
2018 Mentors

Adam Absosedra, Deloitte  
Sara Akbar, Oracle  
Julia Bascom, Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Patrick Cokley, Anthem, Inc.  
Susan Diegelman, AT&T  
Jon Dinesman, Centene Corporation  
Alec Frazier, Autistic Reality  
Dana Fink, Administration for Community Living  
Ben Finzel, RENEWPR  
Merrill Friedman, Anthem, Inc.  
Kathy Guernsey, U.S. International Council on Disabilities  
Judy Heumann, Ford Foundation  
Fred Humphries, Microsoft  
Andy Imparato, Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Kristin Judge, Cybercrime Support Network  
Leah Katz-Hernandez, Gallaudet University  
Beth Kolbe, Sidley Austin LLP  
Bob O’Hara, Center for Workplace Compliance  
Ola Ojewumi, Project ASCEND  
Jessica Queener, Institute for Educational Leadership  
Priscilla Rodriguez, Disability Rights International  
Pete Salavantis, Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation  
Robin Shaffert, Disability Rights Advocate and Attorney  
Diane Smith Howard, National Disability Rights Network  
Frances Vhay, Office of Disability Employment Policy  
Nellie Wild, Alliance for the Adoption of Innovations in Medicine  
John Winfrey, Microsoft

2018 AAPD Intern Angelique Long with her mentor, Merrill Friedman.
2018 Mentor Testimonials

“I thoroughly enjoyed being a mentor to Courtney. She was always joyful, enthusiastic, upbeat, and excited about every aspect of her AAPD internship opportunities. She and I met weekly and discussed her future within the education space. Courtney is currently obtaining her degree in Elementary Education and Women/Gender Studies with the vision of being in school administration. Courtney and I were well matched, as her career interests matched my 17 years of working with young people with disabilities in the field of education. As she was wrapping up her internship at ACB, she conveyed to me her desire to come back to DC for a summer internship experience at the U.S. Department of Education. I was able to connect her to my colleague who worked there and I am hoping, due to that connection, she will be back in DC next summer. I know Courtney will be a credit to our field. I am looking forward to calling her my colleague one day.”

Jessica Queener, Institute for Educational Leadership
Mentor to Courtney Dignan

“Working with Adam this summer was inspiring and reinforced for me the significant contributions that young people with disabilities can make in the workforce. Adam is smart, inquisitive, engaging, and team-oriented. At our meetings, Adam was always interested in self-improvement and how he could make a positive impact on his office. Students like Adam demonstrate the ‘win-win’ that can be achieved by organizations that provide people with disabilities the opportunity to excel.”

Pete Salavantis, Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation
Mentee to Adam Webber
2018 Summer Internship Program Demographics

179 applications received
27 internship openings
Included resume, essay questions, letters of reference

15 states represented plus the District of Columbia in the 2018 class

33% identify as people of color

All self-identify as people with disabilities
19 different disabilities represented

44% identify as LGBTQ+
2018 Notable Outcomes

A number of this year’s interns secured employment immediately following our program.

- Cecilia Grugan will be joining the staff at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as a direct result of her placement there over the summer.
- Lydia Parenteau will begin a new position at Syracuse University’s Burton Blatt Institute, and credits her AAPD internship with making her a more desirable candidate.
- Andrew Hart will join the communications department at DXC Technology in Tysons Corner, VA because of connections built within our program.
- Chris Damon-Cronmiller will start at the Navy’s Equal Employment Office this fall as part of the Workforce Recruitment Program.
- Eiryn Griest-Schwartzman was elected as the Youth Member At Large to the National Council on Independent Living.
2018 Partners

The AAPD Summer Internship Program is made possible through generous financial support from our partners. AAPD would like to thank the Aid Association for the Blind of the District of Columbia, the Arconic Foundation, the AT&T Foundation, Centene Corporation, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Google, Microsoft, the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, and Walmart for their investment in the 2018 program.

Aid Association for the Blind of the District of Columbia
2018 Intern Testimonials

“Having Patrick Cokley as a mentor helped me both personally and professionally. It was great to have someone more experienced who was willing to spend so much of his time helping me lay out my long-term goals and figure out how to accomplish them, as well as someone who understood the difficulties of working in DC for when things became stressful. My relationship with my mentor is invaluable and I am glad to have that continued connection, both professionally and personally, in the future.”

Elijah Armstrong
Placed at the Office of Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)
Mentor Patrick Cokley

“I was incredibly lucky to have Jessica Queener as a mentor this summer. She was incredibly kind and knowledgeable about the greater disability community. She was a safe space where I could speak to her about my accomplishments within my internship experience as well as confide in her with some questions I had about different aspects of my job. Not only did she take time out of her week to meet with me, but she made a point to introduce me to people within her own network. Because of her dedication, I am a more informed and more connected advocate. I know Jessica and I will have a lifelong relationship.”

Courtney Dignan
Placed at the American Council of the Blind
Mentor Jessica Queener

"My internship placement experience was incredibly rewarding. I was part of the team at the office, completed meaningful projects, and learned a lot in the process. It gave me confidence and a new perspective for career exploration."

Morgan Dunnigan
Placed at the Information Technology Industry Council

“As an AAPD intern, I learned valuable career development skills in my placement and through the Disability Advocacy Certificate Program, strengthened my understanding of the type of work I enjoy, and gained tremendous connections through networking opportunities facilitated by the AAPD staff. I am confident that the skills, connections, and insight into what I want to do will help me in my eventual job search after graduating from college, as well as in my professional and personal lives long-term.”

Adam Fishbein
Placed at the National Council on Learning Disabilities
“My mentorship through AAPD was an exciting and fulfilling experience. Julia Bascom, my mentor, was able to provide extremely valuable insight and advice about working in the disability field and as a disabled person myself. Because of this connection, I was able to get first-hand experience and knowledge about what being a disability advocate means, and I couldn't be more grateful.”

Megan Lambert
Placed at the National Disability Rights Network
Mentor Julia Bascom

“In just a short two-and-a-half months, my summer placement unexpectedly proved to be the genesis of my current career. Additionally, this unique experience gifted me with the understanding of what kind of disability advocate I can be by supporting other emerging stars to rise as I rise. Because of AAPD, we are noticed, we are capable, and we are confident.”

Cecilia Grugan
Placed at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

“Through the AAPD summer internship program, I had the opportunity to broaden my knowledge and experience in advocacy. This summer provided a space for me to grow as a disability rights advocate and further develop my passion for social justice issues. Thank you AAPD for providing an atmosphere for me to explore advocacy and social justice in new ways.”

Sarah Patnaude
Placed at the Feminist Majority Foundation

“My placement at United Spinal Association was both welcoming and accommodating. I learned a great deal about lobbying, the issues facing the disability community, and potential areas for personal growth. I also developed multiple networks from all over the nation who share my common interest and experiences. Overall, the AAPD internship was an invaluable experience that will serve me well in the future. Thanks to all involved.”

Laura Power
Placed at the United Spinal Association

“Before participating in the AAPD Summer Internship Program, I had never lived away from home and had never worked a full-time job. The supports that AAPD provided me through the summer allowed me to successfully navigate being a person with a disability in the professional world while living and working independently 900 miles from home. My confidence in my ability to set my professional goals high was strengthened by my involvement in this program.”

Ellie Stitzer
Placed at the Administration on Community Living
Alumni Reflections

Nermina Aly
Interned with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)
Class of 2017

“You don’t know how much this internship program will change you for the better until you actually experience it. I’ve had the best summer of my life thanks to AAPD. I have developed into a student who has had the experiences needed to graduate knowing that I now have skills that can be extremely beneficial for my professional development.”

Kelli Lee
IT Analyst, Cisco Systems
Interned with the US Department of Agriculture
Class of 2013

What was the most memorable part of your experience with the Summer Internship Program?
“Getting to meet other interns and share my DC experiences with them. I still keep in touch with a few of my friends that I interned with.”

Emily Kovalesky
Interned with Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)
Class of 2017

“The AAPD summer internship was an amazing experience. I learned so much about myself, the disability community, and my future goals. If I learned anything that will stay with me forever, it’s that you have to bring your whole self to the table with every opportunity presented at you and if they don’t want your whole self, then that’s not the place for you. Learning that has helped me grow into a stronger and more confident person, all thanks to AAPD.”
Maddy Ruvolo  
San Francisco Fellow, City & County of San Francisco  
Interned with the Office of Congressman Alan Grayson  
*Class of 2013*  

**How did your participation in the Summer Internship Program help prepare you to enter the workforce?**  
*“Participating in the Summer Internship Program increased my confidence in my own abilities and gave me a deep connection to the disability community. I bought my first suit, went to my first networking happy hour, and exchanged business cards for the first time during the course of the intern program.”*  

Chakir’ Underdown  
Interned with National Disability Rights Network  
*Class of 2017*  

*“When you're able to work and live in environments that support your identity and encourage your growth, you become an asset. You belong, you're home. That’s the AAPD experience.”*  

Rose Sloan  
Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor  
Interned with the National Disability Rights Network  
*Class of 2013*  

**What was the most memorable part of your experience with the Summer Internship Program?**  
*“The friendships of the fellow interns; a new view on disability—no need to be ashamed—be proud! Also higher expectation of all people with disabilities—learning the struggles and stereotypes people with disabilities face (to be clear, I understood the stereotypes and low expectations I faced, but everyone has different experiences).”*
Alumni Spotlight

Ariel Carlin is a graduate student at the Boston University School of Education working towards her Masters of Education. Ariel completed her internship with AAPD in 2017 and was placed with the Administration for Community Living as a Policy and Evaluation Intern. She graduated from Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Science in Human Services and Sociology in 2016.

Claire Houston is a Disability Studies major at Mount Holyoke College. She is also completing an internship with the office of the Technology Access Coordinator at Mount Holyoke College to improve resources and training for students who use Assistive Technology. After completing her internship with AAPD in 2017, Claire returned to AAPD as a Google Policy Fellow in 2018. Through the fellowship, Clare assisted with the We Will Ride campaign, raising awareness about the challenges people with disabilities face in transportation and advocating for accessibility.

Erika Hudson works as a staff assistant with the Russell Group, Inc. in Arlington, VA. After graduating from Indiana University in May 2017, Erika completed her AAPD internship with the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. After the program, she relocated to DC full-time to complete a legislative internship with Senator Joe Donnelly (D-IN) before joining the Russell Group.

Emily Kovalesky is a HealthReach Community Health Centers Employee with AmeriCorps VISTA located in Waterville, Maine. She graduated from Allegheny College in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Global Health Studies, with a double minor in Biology and Psychology. Emily completed her internship with AAPD in 2017 and was placed with Senator Bob Casey (D-PA).

Chakir’ Underdown is an intake specialist with Disability Rights Ohio. She graduated from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law in 2018. She also holds Masters Degrees in Marketing Communications and Latin American Studies, as well as a Bachelor in Spanish and International Studies. Chakir’ completed her AAPD internship in 2017 with the National Disability Rights Network.
Alumni Testimonials

“My experience in the AAPD internship program helped me to see that I am not alone in my experience of disability. I had not been introduced to the disability rights community and would not have gone on to be in the career position I am in now had I not had that experience.”
Rochelle Honey-Arcement, Class of 2012

“Being an AAPD intern gave me the experience of a lifetime by learning about disability culture and getting first-hand experience in an office setting. I had an amazing time meeting people.”
Kelli Lee, Class of 2013

“I look back on my time as a 2013 AAPD intern as one of the most memorable experiences ever. Spending the summer with a group of diverse individuals with disabilities, someone like me, it can’t get much more awesome than that!”
Megan E. Marshall, Class of 2013

“The AAPD Summer Internship Program was a life changing experience. I had the opportunity to intern in a congressional office full of brilliant, dedicated people and I met some of my closest friends and mentors through the program.”
Maddy Ruvolo, Class of 2013
Your continued support helps build the next generation of leaders in the disability community.

Through your investment, more students with disabilities will have access to the opportunities they need to take their careers to the next level. Contributions are directly invested in the program to ensure that the Washington, DC internship experience is financially and physically accessible to all students with disabilities. Here’s what your donation provides:

**Round trip travel**  
AAPD provides transportation to and from Washington, DC for each intern.

**Fully accessible housing**  
Finding affordable, accessible housing in Washington, DC can be extremely difficult. AAPD provides housing for each intern with any disability-related accommodations, located near AAPD’s office as well as public transportation.

**Living stipend**  
To help cover various day-to-day costs, AAPD provides a stipend to each intern.

**Personal and professional development opportunities**  
AAPD covers the registration costs for interns to attend events like the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Annual Conference.

AAPD Interns and alumni participate in the annual National Council on Independent Living March & Rally during the summer of 2016 (photos courtesy of NCIL).

If you are interested in becoming a partner of the AAPD Summer Internship Program, please contact Zach Baldwin, Director of Outreach, at zbaldwin@aapd.com or 202-521-4310.
Thank you for your support!

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