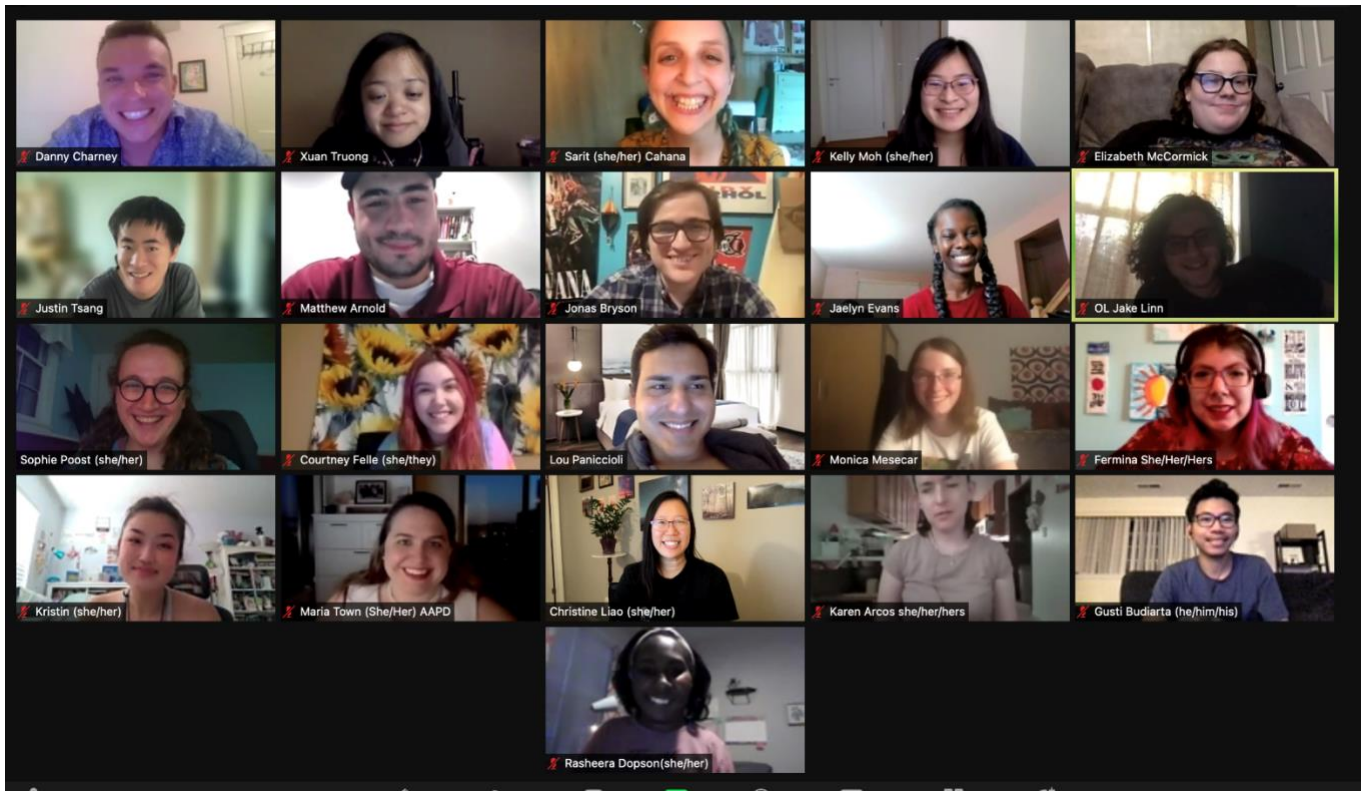




# AAPD

American Association of People with Disabilities



## 2021 Annual Report: *AAPD Summer Internship Program & Disability Certificate Programs*

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## About the AAPD Summer Internship Program

The AAPD Summer Internship Program provides an opportunity for currently enrolled students and recent graduates from across the United States to gain hands-on professional experience and advance their career goals. We curate a diverse class of interns who are placed on Capitol Hill, in government agencies, with national nonprofit organizations, or in the private sector so they can be exposed to different employment opportunities and develop a peer network. Through the Summer Internship Program, AAPD provides a class of interns with disabilities the skills, resources, and networks they need to not only become employed, but to be employed in high-level positions. We are able to recruit a diverse class of interns that may not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in a program like ours by covering the costs of travel and housing, and providing a living stipend. For many of our interns, AAPD's Summer Internship Program provides their first exposure to the broader disability community, which empowers them to be advocates and sets them on a path of employment.



Since the program was established in 2002, AAPD has provided **19 years** of providing meaningful experiences to interns with disabilities



**Nearly 500 interns** have furthered their career by participating in AAPD's programs



**600+ colleges and universities** in AAPD's network



The **premier leadership development opportunity** for people with disabilities

Our Summer Internship Program provides a comprehensive experience beyond just the 9-to-5 intern work week. Each intern is also matched with a professional mentor based on their career goals. In addition, AAPD educates each intern class on the history of the disability rights movement, the challenges our community faces today, and skills to advocate for a better future. We are committed to advancing the intern's professional development by providing numerous opportunities to participate in social and professional networking events and other career development opportunities.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 concerns, the 2021 Summer Internship Program looked different from any other since its beginning 19 years ago. AAPD was proud to offer its first ever virtual Summer Internship Program.

The 2021 cohort was a blended cohort of interns from 2020 and 2021. Since the internship aspect of the program could not be executed in 2020, AAPD welcomed back many of the Disability Advocacy Certificate Program Class of 2020 as well as a new class of interns totaling 28 interns for the 2021 cohort. Many of the traditional internship components such as orientation, internship placements, Certificate Programs, mentorship, professional development, and community activities were hosted online.

*“The AAPD Summer Internship Program is absolutely a wonderful opportunity for any person with disabilities looking to develop themselves personally and professionally.”*

— Lou Paniccioli

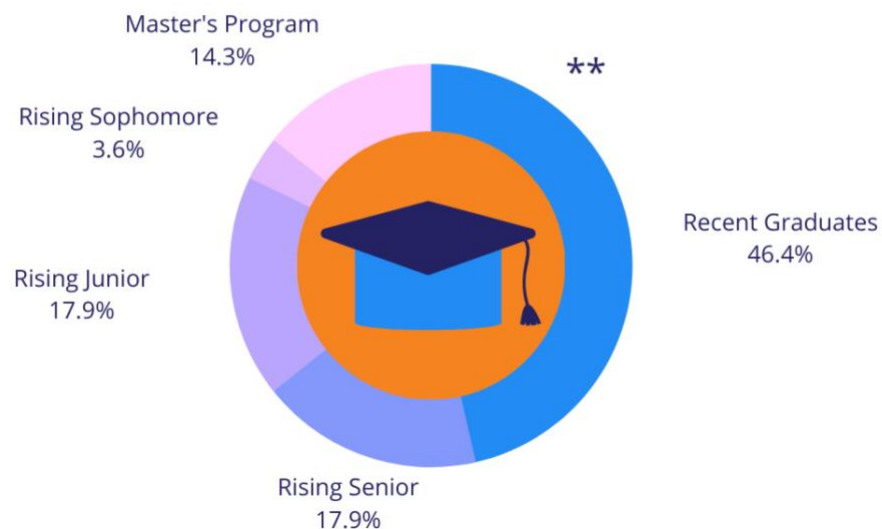
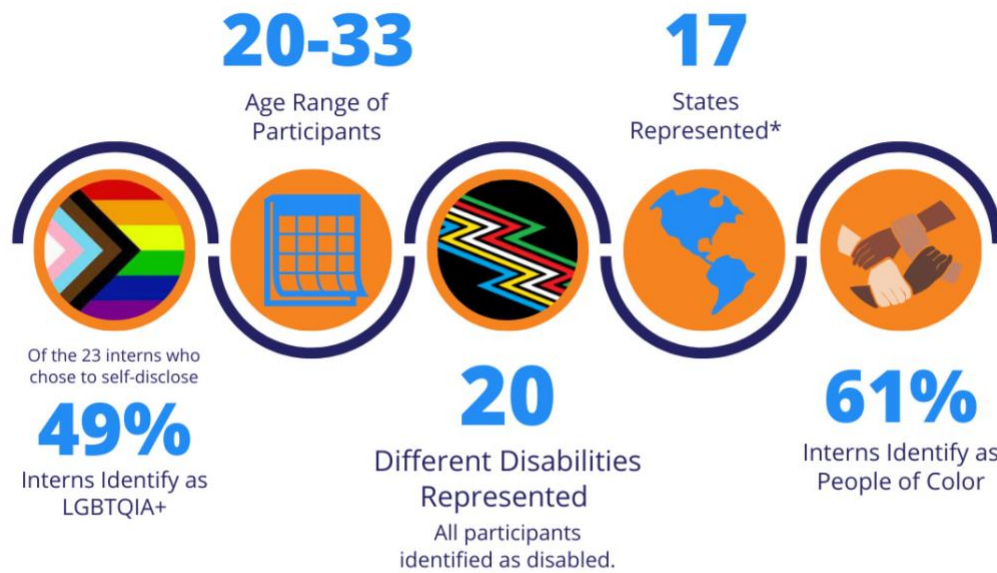
*“I am and always will be grateful for the opportunity to participate in AAPD’s internship program! The people and experiences, despite it being virtual, were essential to my development as a leader. I’m so appreciative of the opportunities we were given and I’m excited to apply my knowledge in the real world.”*

— Kristin Kumagawa

*“AAPD has helped me gain a deeper understanding of disability advocacy skills and be able to use my skills from my internship towards future opportunities in my industry of focus.”*

— Justin Tsang

## 2021 AAPD Summer Internship Program Demographics



\*The statistic of 17 states represented is based on the location of their current residence at the time of their application.

\*\*Class standing is based on when interns applied to the program. Since AAPD had a blended cohort, some have changed.

## 2021 Participants

### Karen Arcos

**Placement Site:** American Association for the Advancement of Science

Dr. Karen Arcos was raised in southern California and is of Colombian and Mauritian background. She is a University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellow researching memory at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She earned her Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience and an emphasis in Chicano Latino Studies from the University of California, Irvine. As a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow, her doctoral research focused on how your senses – or lack of them – impact your ability to remember information.



Thanks to those who have helped her be where she is today, Karen is passionate about giving back to her community. She mentors students on undergraduate and graduate admissions processes, as well as on conducting experimental procedures. As an alumna and volunteer at Blind Children's Center, she has experience working with children whose disabilities range from blindness to intellectual, along with sharing her insights with parents using her Spanish bilingual and bicultural fluency. She also co-founded a regional support group by and for youth with disabilities and their families called Survive or Thrive.

### Bruno Matthew Arnold

**Placement Site:** Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)

Matthew Arnold is a rising senior at the University of West Florida working towards a bachelor's degree in English with a specification on Creative and Legislative Writing. During his time at the University, Matthew has served four years as a Senator for Student Government wherein he was the Senator of the Year 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. He started a non-profit organization in the State of Florida targeted at assisting the disparities in the disability community known as Trident Disabilities Inc. Matthew enjoys participating in undergrad research in various fields including American History and English Education. He also participates in many local and state initiatives such as the Equal Justice Initiative, Southeastern Guide Dogs Walkathons, and Rally in Tally just to name a few. Matthew Arnold works with state legislators to bring together a more inclusive and accessible Florida. Matthew wants to dedicate his life to disability advocacy regardless of career and believes our stories, advocacy, and triumphs over adversity are the most empowering tools we have.





## Kaitlyn “Katy” Brennan

**Placement Site:** Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Katy Brennan is a rising Junior at Columbia University studying Human Rights and Hispanic Studies. She is an activist and a writer and has worked extensively on issues of gender-based violence, disability rights, and climate justice. Her writing, which often focuses on disability and chronic illness, has been published in Al Jazeera, Yahoo News, and NYAToday. Katy previously served as Digital Content Director to Diversability for three years where she fostered inclusive spaces online to discuss disability-related issues. In the future, she hopes to pursue a JD/PhD in disability rights law, in order to address pervasive inaccessibility in domestic and international legal systems.



## Jonas Bryson

**Placement Site:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development

Jonas Bryson is a recent graduate of North Carolina State University, where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and minored in History. A native of Wilmington, NC, Jonas has dedicated his life to standing up for the marginalized and learning more about the world around him. From his first job where he taught children with disabilities how to surf at a charity where he used to be a student, to writing stories for his local newspaper, to interning at the New Hanover County Public Defender’s Office, to even working in the halls of Congress and in the Office of the Governor of North Carolina, Jonas has always sought to challenge the status quo and bring people together around a program of liberty and justice for all.



At the end of the day, he believes, there is little that cannot be accomplished when regular people stand together and recognize their common humanity. Compassion, he maintains, ought to be at the center of policymaking and to him that means that everybody, regardless of the cards that they were dealt at birth, should be able to live the American Dream of having a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life. When he’s not applying to graduate school or volunteering on political campaigns, Jonas can be found playing piano or his beloved Fender Stratocaster, gushing about Star Wars, or re-watching old stand-up comedy specials, oftentimes simultaneously.

## Gusti Budiarta

**Placement Site:** World Institute on Disability

Gusti Budiarta completed his master's degree in Global Development at Cornell University in May 2021. He is passionate about international disability rights and global mental health. During his time at Cornell, he was able to conduct several independent studies in some topics such as disability in the workplace, comorbidity of learning disability, and disability-inclusive development program for people with mental health issues. He wants to be a researcher in the field of Global Mental Health and aspires to be an international advocate for people with mental health issues and psychiatric disabilities. He likes to go hiking and enjoys oil-painting.



## Sarit Cahana

**Placement Site:** Smithsonian Institution, Arts + Industries Building

Sarit Cahana (she/her) graduated from Lewis & Clark College in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in English with a Gender Studies minor. She started her disability advocacy work in High School after not getting the support she needed for her disability in the classroom. Since then, she has continued to promote accessibility and educate about the disability community. In college, she founded and led the Disabled Student Union. There, she built a community for and advocated on behalf of disabled students. She has worked in politics, nonprofits, and as a community organizer. She is interested in working to make the educational system and museums accessible for people with disabilities. She also enjoys knitting and reading.



## Daniel "Danny" Charney

**Placement Site:** Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)

Danny Charney is a rising senior at the University of Puget Sound working towards a bachelor's degree in Politics and Government and Communications. Danny has previously worked with GLSEN, a national LGBTQ nonprofit, working with students across the country in ensuring respect and kindness in school. Through his coursework at Puget Sound, he became increasingly interested in advancing self-advocacy and accessibility for students with learning disabilities. While at Puget Sound, Danny has served as a student senator, advocating





for students with disabilities in roundtables and meetings to ensure students got the accommodations and respect they deserve on campus. Danny's extracurricular interests revolve around student engagement: He is currently a resident assistant on campus, supporting first year students with the transition into college. He is also the Lectures Coordinator for the university, bringing speakers from diverse backgrounds to give important lessons to the campus community. After he graduates, Danny plans to enter the journalism/media relations field with the goal of highlighting stories and experiences that often don't get shared.

## Rasheera Dopson

**Placement Site:** Senator John Ossoff (D-GA)

Rasheera Dopson is a Disability Justice Activist, Author, Speaker, and philanthropist. Born with two rare diseases Goldenhar syndrome and Vater syndrome these two medical conditions have caused her to have over 103 surgeries. She lives at the intersection of having both physical disabilities and chronic illness. She is currently a 1st-year student at Morehouse School of Medicine studying Public Health. Her main areas of focus are health policy and research. She hopes to one day explore concepts of intersectionality that include disability in the field of academia and how they can be bridged together through further disability research.



Alongside her academic path, Rasheera has also served as a fierce advocate for the Disability community at large. She has been called upon to share her personal and professional experiences in living with a disability and chronic health conditions from organizations across the country. Her most recent work has been a guest panelist for Texas Children's Hospital at Baylor Medical College and their panel discussion on Psychosocial care and experiences for individuals with craniofacial conditions. Her collaboration initiatives can also be seen among patient-focused organizations and initiatives such as; The Children Craniofacial Association (CCA), FACES National Association of Craniofacial Conditions, The Georgia Council of Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), NORD, Global Genes network, The Every life Foundation, Rare Advocacy Movement, and many others.

## Jaelyn Evans

**Placement Site:** National Council on Disability

Jaelyn Evans of Chicago, Illinois is a member of the class of 2022 at Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia. She is pursuing a Political Science major and a Chinese minor. Her academic honors include Dean's List, membership in Omicron Delta Kappa – a national leadership honor society, and membership in Pi



Sigma Alpha – a national political science honor society. During the fall of 2019, she studied abroad in Beijing, China as a recipient of the Chinese government scholarship. Jaelyn began her advocacy for marginalized people in high school and has continued to remain passionate about this cause. She currently serves on her school’s Black Student Alliance, and as a senator and the chair of the Academic Affairs committee for Student Government. After graduating, Jaelyn plans on attending law school and eventually working in the federal government, continuing to advocate for the rights of marginalized people.

### Courtney Felle

**Placement Site:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Community Living

Courtney Felle (she/they) recently graduated from Kenyon College. Within their American Studies major, they developed a focus on Health, Illness, and Disability Studies, and they have an English minor and Public Policy concentration. They aim to combine disability and chronic illness advocacy with healthcare policy, improving healthcare access and outcomes for all, especially underserved populations. Previously, they have interned with Anthem, Inc. Disability Policy Engagement Team, the Museum of Disability History, and the Knox County Health Department, and they co-led Kenyon’s LGBTQ+ women and gender-nonconforming students’ affinity group. In their free time, they enjoy crocheting, drinking tea, making overly specific Spotify playlists, and taking long road trips.



### Naomi Hess

**Placement Site:** Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

Originally from Clarksville, Maryland, Naomi Hess is a rising senior at Princeton University, where she is majoring in the School of Public & International Affairs with minors in Journalism and Gender & Sexuality Studies. On campus, Naomi is an Associate News Editor for The Daily Princetonian and a peer academic adviser for her residential college. She is a Community Engagement Intern at the Princeton Center for Jewish Life, where she initiated and leads annual Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month Shabbats. As a Student Fellow for the AccessAbility Center, she plans events supporting Princeton students with disabilities and runs communications channels for the Center.



Naomi got her start in disability activism at a young age through her position as the Maryland State Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association for two consecutive years. She served as a Public Policy Intern for the Center for Disability Rights in Summer 2019, with one of her main projects being a position paper about increasing the political engagement of people with disabilities. In 2020, she participated in the AAPD Disability Advocacy Certificate

Program and worked as a Communications and Engagement Intern for Global Fund for Women. Naomi hopes to combine her passions for politics and writing in her future career in disability advocacy. In her spare time, Naomi likes to read, watch TV, and spend time with friends.

### **Kristin Kumagawa**

**Placement Site:** Disability EmpowHer Network

Kristin Kumagawa is a rising junior at Chapman University studying communication, disability studies, and public relations. She was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus in seventh grade, which has largely impacted her desire to increase disability awareness and accessibility in the media. Kristin was a recipient of the 2020 NBCUniversal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship and works two campus jobs. In her free time, she makes content for the non-profit PPE4ALL (a non-profit which distributes personal protective equipment), is a member of Chapman's Bateman team (a national public relations competition), as well as Greek Life as a Tri Delta. Her creativity and passion for inclusivity are what drive her to do as much as she can to impact others and her surroundings. Her service dog, Mailie, and her family are also large contributors to her success.



### **Nahyun (Jennifer) Lee**

**Placement Site:** Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

Jennifer Lee is a rising junior at Princeton University, majoring in the School of Public and International Affairs with certificates in Italian and Asian American Studies. Hailing from northern New Jersey, Jennifer is incredibly passionate about civic engagement and disability advocacy, with a vested interest in public policy and law as a future career. A proud Korean-American immigrant, Jennifer cares very deeply about exploring the intersection between culture and service. At Princeton, Jennifer serves as the co-president of the Asian American Students Association, the largest cultural advocacy group for Asian Pacific Islanders and Desi Americans on campus. She also acts as the co-chair of the Pace Civic Leadership Council, a campus organization that connects students to service opportunities while incubating professional leadership development. Furthermore, Jennifer is a Project Manager with Princeton University Nonprofit Consulting, a chair for the Program in Law and Public Affairs, and an Undergraduate Associate with the Liechtenstein Institute for Self-Determination. Last summer, Jennifer partook in the inaugural Vote100 Fellowship, a campus campaign aspiring for 100% of the Princeton undergraduate student body to engage civically.

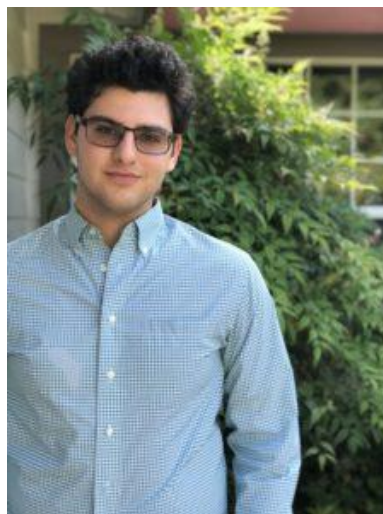


Jennifer was diagnosed with Crohn’s disease in June 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. As such, she became incredibly involved with her collegiate disability community her sophomore year, particularly through her Undergraduate Student Government’s Disability Task Force and the Disability Collective, a student-run support network. As a newfound disability advocate for chronic illness, Jennifer is a 2021 International Fellow with the Crohn’s and Colitis Young Adult Network (CCYAN) and serves on the National Council for College Leaders in partnership with the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation.

## Jake Linn

**Placement Site:** Disability:IN

Jake Linn is an artist and action oriented-advocate who focuses on using creative tools to drive public policy changes at all/any system. This is executed through the arts such as film and graphic design. Jake loves to work with anyone and everyone to reduce stigma and discrimination while improve inclusive opportunities. You can often hear him say, “while policy can be made into law, art is what shifts perspective and culture.” Jake is most passionate working on LGBT+, Jewish, disability, and brain health initiatives, as those are the communities he identifies with.



Along the way of his artistic and advocacy journey, Jake became a California Art Scholar with work showcased in numerous galleries in Midtown Sacramento, California as well as Arts of Life’s Circle Contemporary Gallery in Chicago, Illinois. His writing was published in The Sacramento Bee and School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s F newsmagazine. Jake was also featured in The New York Times’ Upfront Magazine. His upcoming projects include writing a book alongside AAPD’s 2020 and 2021 cohort, creating a film interviewing prominent figures with disabilities regarding Hollywood’s disability depiction, and a panel debunking conversion therapy.

## Fermina Lopez

**Placement Site:** Association of People Supporting Employment First

Fermina knew at an early age she would have challenges in life due to her disability, but she has not allowed her disability to stop her from her career goals. Born with a rare genetic disorder Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CDLS) which causes cognitive and physical development delays, Fermina has faced many barriers in life. Even though Fermina continues to deal with medical challenges, she has not allowed her condition to keep her from success.





Fermina graduated in 2020, from the IDEAL Program at Lipscomb University and is seeking a career as an Event Planner or in the Entertainment Industry. While attending Lipscomb, Fermina enrolled in college courses such as public speaking, event planning, and on camera delivery to gain skills for her desired career. Fermina’s most recent accomplishments are serving as a discussion panelist at the MNPS Exceptional Ed Teacher Conference, collaborating with several State departments and local agencies to be a motivational speaker at the 2019 Youth Advisory Conference, being a Peer Mentor at the Summer Youth Leadership Academy 2019/20, which earned her an EmpowerTN Peer Mentor Award. Fermina has participated as an intern at EmpowerTN and served as an intern at the Frist Museum in Spring 2020. Recently Fermina has participated in a live radio podcast on the West Coast celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing and protecting women’s constitutional right to vote. Fermina plans to continue to advocate for people with disabilities and seek opportunities in the Entertainment Industry.

### **Elizabeth McCormick**

**Placement Site:** Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Elizabeth McCormick received her B.A. in Public Policy and Management from SUNY Albany in May 2021. Elizabeth was born with cerebral palsy and grew up in Niagara Falls, New York. Throughout her childhood she realized the struggles disabled people face and became passionate about disability justice and advocacy. She is specifically interested in societal attitudes about disability, reforming the social insurance system, the experiences of disabled people in higher education and transition services, as well as accessibility of housing and transportation. On her college campus she advocated for disabled students and was President of Delta Alpha Pi, the honor society for disabled students. In Spring 2021, she participated in her school’s Semester in Washington program where she lived in Washington, D.C. and was an intern for the D.C. Office of Disability Rights. Previously, she interned for Disability Rights New York. In the future, she would like to receive her Master of Public Administration and advocate for systems-level change in her professional career. When not engaging in activism, Elizabeth loves musical theatre and all things Disney.



### **Monica Mesecar**

**Placement Site:** Anthem, Inc.

Monica Mesecar is attending her final semester at the University of Notre Dame. She graduated in May 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Behavior, as well as a minor in Compassionate Care in Medicine. Monica is the founder and president of the student club “Access-ABLE”—a group made up of students with disabilities and allies





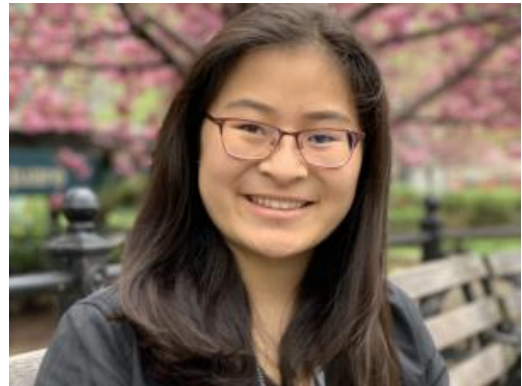
that seeks to promote advocacy, spread disability awareness, and build community at Notre Dame.

Her time in college and experience with Access-ABLE ignited her passion for disability advocacy, and she hopes to further develop these skills through this program. Currently, her aspirations are to pursue post-baccalaureate neuroscience research before applying to an MD-PhD program. This dual-degree program would allow her to become a physician while also pursuing a doctorate in neuroscience. Eventually, she hopes to become a neurologist or psychiatrist, conduct neuroscience research, teach the next generation of students, and advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities, especially in both STEM-fields and medicine. In pursuit of these goals, she has already completed multiple summers of research, including the University of Delaware's specific program for students with disabilities in STEM (SELI-REU program). In addition to her AAPD internship, Monica has also been selected as a Disability:IN Next Generation Leader for the Summer of 2021.

### Kelly Moh

**Placement Site:** Center for American Progress

Kelly is a rising senior at the University of Pennsylvania majoring in Psychology and minoring in Urban Education. On campus, she is the President of Penn's chapter of Alpha Phi Omega, a national community service fraternity; on the executive board of Disability Advocacy at Penn; and volunteers in West Philadelphia schools and at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. As a result of her personal and volunteer experiences that she has been fortunate to become involved with, she hopes to go into occupational therapy or special education after graduation.



### Elayne Otstot

**Placement Site:** Centene, Inc.

Elayne Otstot is a recent graduate and aspiring attorney/public health policy professional from the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. She is passionate about emergency management and disaster preparedness; disability access and inclusion; and health disparities affecting rural, disabled, and other vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Currently, Elayne is the communications and member engagement coordinator at The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports, and former newsfeed researcher for the Disability and Abuse Project. She is an alumna of the inaugural law fellowship cohort at the Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy, and Innovation at Loyola Law School. Elayne holds a graduate certificate in disability policy through Loyola, and a bachelor's degree in public health from the University



of Texas at Arlington. As an undergraduate student, she served for two years as the Office for Disability Services' representative to the President's Diversity Roundtable and led a community health education project on HPV prevention.

### Louis "Lou" Paniccioli

**Placement Site:** U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Office of Federal Operations

Louis Paniccioli is a recent graduate of the College Of Staten Island, where he majored in Political Science with a dual minor in legal studies and philosophy. His interest in politics began when he first took a political science course in his sophomore year at the College Of Staten Island. He learned about the dynamics of politics and how it could bring about social justice; having experienced discrimination as a brown man with disabilities, he saw politics as a way to secure equal opportunity and true justice for all. He developed as a leader through participation in various student organizations. He became avidly involved with the Staten Island and New York State Young Democrats, the New York State Democratic Committee's youth divisions. Louis interned with Nonviolence International, an International NGO, researching and analyzing International small arms trafficking in addition to interning with the Office of now Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer. Given his diligence, persistence, and determination to overcome all odds, Louis is confident he can succeed in whatever he puts his mind to. Louis aspires to become a lawyer, pursue legal and electoral political careers and write both legislation and policy. When he is not busy watching the news about current events, he enjoys reading books about civil and human rights and binge-watching movies.



### Vraj Patel

**Placement Site:** U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Environment, Health, Safety, and Security

Vraj Patel is a rising junior at Rutgers University pursuing a major in Computer Science and a minor in Mathematics. At a young age, he developed a passion for discovering new uses for technology and understanding how it positively impacts people's lives. His curiosity has led him to conduct independent research centered on credit card fraud detection and predicting heart disease in patients. At present, he possesses several certifications, including Microsoft Software Development Fundamentals, Microsoft Mobility and Device Fundamentals, and CompTIA IT Fundamentals. While he continues to feed his passion for learning, Vraj also remains committed to paying it forward. He has volunteered at a local library to teach coding to young students and is now a leader in the Computer Science Developer club at his university. He has contributed his knowledge in software engineering, finance, data science, web



development, and IT while volunteering and interning at several local businesses and nonprofits. Outside of work and studies, Vraj enjoys traveling and the thrill of exploring new destinations.

### Mariah “Riah” Person

**Placement Site:** Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Mariah “Riah” Person has been a student at Metropolitan Community College & University of Nebraska. In 2019, the same year they began to experience autistic burnout that led to their autism diagnosis, Riah was accepted into an art fellowship at the Union for Contemporary Arts. The end of the year project was a Autistic space event that involved applying accessibility from a social lense. Since then, Riah has been introduced to frameworks such as disability justice, abolition, healing justice, restorative/transformatiive justice, and more. The frameworks have given them a better perspective on how to participate in building liberation within their community. They’re excited to learn how to better play a part in building community centered solutions.



### Catalina “Cat” Romero

**Placement Site:** The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Catalina Romero is a 21 year old southern Californian. She graduated in May 2021 with a major in Social Work from Gallaudet University. Growing up as a deaf Latina has helped her find a spark in social work and advocacy. She has been on a debate team at Gallaudet for a semester. Catalina hopes to work closely with reforming the criminal justice system, and she is passionate about giving back to the community. Majoring in social work has helped her grow as a person along with her life experiences. She loves to travel whenever she can, and she enjoys nature photography.



### Xuan Truong

**Placement Site:** National Disability Rights Network

Xuan (pronounced Sue Anne) Truong is a current Graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She currently serves the University Career Center as a Graduate Assistant, focusing on Disability Outreach. She received her undergraduate in International Studies from NC State University and her Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management at UNC

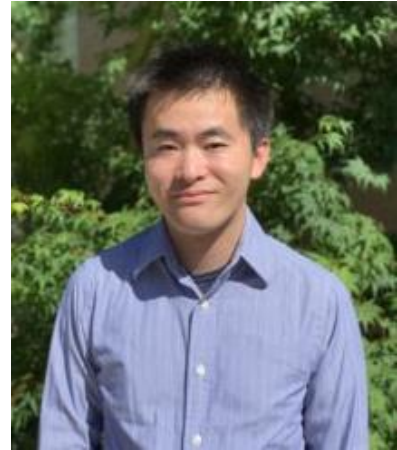


Charlotte in 2019. Currently, she is pursuing her Master of Social Work (MSW). Xuan plans to apply her education and experiences into making employment more accessible and equitable for the disabled population on both the local and global scale.

### Justin Tsang

**Placement Site:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Multifamily Housing

Justin Tsang was an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, where he finished his degree in Urban Studies in Spring 2020. Justin has been passionate about helping others with disabilities live fulfilling lives. His interdisciplinary knowledge in public health, urban planning, psychology, and architecture has helped him bridge the connection between cities and individuals with disabilities. Justin is particularly interested in housing policy, universal design, healthcare equity, and community services to help the disabled population. Justin was part of the Spectrum Connect program at UC Berkeley and enjoys engaging in discussion groups and recreational activities with other diverse students on the Autism Spectrum. Before attending UC Berkeley, Justin has volunteered at a wide range of settings, including hospitals, homeless shelters, and disability-focused nonprofit organizations. Justin was also a participant at the Youth Organizing! Disabled and Proud program of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) and the Raise the Roof program at The Kelsey in San Francisco. Justin aims to pursue a career in housing and community development, passionate about working either at the federal, state, or local level. In his free time, Justin enjoys hiking, watching movies, exploring new music, and surfing.



### Jesica Weaver

**Placement Site:** U.S. International Council on Disability

Jesica was born and raised in Northern Virginia, and she is currently a rising senior at SUNY Binghamton. At Binghamton, she is working towards a bachelor's degree Political Science with a concentration in International Relations and a minor in History. In the Spring of 2020, Jesica studied abroad in Saint Petersburg, Russia where she was accepted into the International Relations, Political Science, and Economics faculty. At her home campus, she is a cofounder and treasurer of the national organization Leading Women of Tomorrow where she works towards closing the gender gap in civil service and government careers. In the Fall 2019 semester, Jesica interned at Congressman Anthony Brindisi's Office in Binghamton, NY. She saw the importance of community engagement and outreach within local and national





politics. Since discovering her love for international affairs, she has become an ardent world traveler and is interested in international disability rights and policy.

## Deanna Yadollahi

**Placement Site:** Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability

Deanna Parvin Yadollahi (they/them) is a [disabled](#), [neurodivergent](#), [mad](#), non-binary, diasporic mixed-race Iranian and Toltec-Mexican community activist, friend, and dog parent. Deanna's scholar-art-activism is informed by their lived experience and both with and for their communities. Deanna is passionate about collaboratively undoing [ableism](#) and [intersecting oppressions](#), especially as it relates to [collective accessibility](#). They hope to enact institutional change and radical reimagination that will lead to more supportive and just realities.

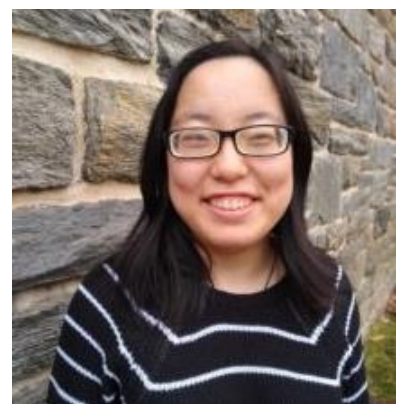


Deanna enjoys making connections with people and journeying with others to find creative ways to navigate a world that wasn't made for all of us. Deanna's work includes community-building, resource-creating, presenting, writing, being an access doula, and Deanna's creative access consulting practice. Their work is based in deep appreciation for [disability justice](#), which is [intersectional](#) and [calls for cross-movement solidarity](#) as well as [community-advocated accessibility practices](#). Deanna is pursuing a Masters degree in Disability Studies, and most highly values knowledge that is co-created within their communities. Deanna acknowledges, with respect, that they are a settler on the lands of the [Kizh Nation](#). They support the [LandBack movement](#), [Climate Justice](#), acknowledging historic and intergenerational oppression, and dismantling its continuations today. At this time, you can visit [Deanna's working draft website \(bit.ly/D-Y-Scholarship\)](#)!

## Pearl Zhang

**Placement Site:** U.S. Access Board

Pearl is a rising senior studying educational studies and computer science at Swarthmore College. She first became interested in computer science after attending Google's Computer Science Summer Institute the summer before her freshman year of college. She hopes to integrate technology into education; she cares deeply about designing for learner empowerment and for equity, especially when it comes to computer science curriculum and social computing. She is particularly interested in designing more effective accessible technology for users with disabilities. Outside of school, she enjoys reading fiction, writing poetry, and cooking with friends and family.





## Orientation Week

The interns attended a four-day orientation week from Monday, May 24th through Thursday, May 27th. Activities included:

- **Panel with AAPD Staff**
- **Workshops on Disability Inclusion & Intersectionality and Accommodating Measures**, Keri Gray, President, Keri Gray Group (Class of 2011)
- **Workshop on Disability Identity and Disclosure in the Workplace**, Teresa Danso-Danquah, Investment Associate, Energize Ventures
- **Workshop on Workplace Accommodations**, Tracie DeFreitas, M.S., Principal Consultant/ADA Specialist, Job Accommodation Network
- **Book Discussion with Returning Interns of *Enabling Acts: The Hidden Story of how the Americans with Disabilities Act Gave the Largest US Minority Its Rights* by Lennard Davis**
- **Book Discussion with New Interns of *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* Edited by Alice Wong**
- **Panel with AAPD Summer Internship Program Alumni**, April Caputi, Creative Associate, Walt Disney Television's Executive Incubator Program (Class of 2017); Eric Harris, Public Policy Director, Disability Rights California (Class of 2013); Ola Ojewumni, Founder & Director, Project ASCEND (Class of 2011); María Pereira, Data Analysis Consultant, Inter-American Development Bank (Class of 2018)
- **Workshop on Self-Care and Community Care**, Kyra Beckish (Class of 2020); Courtney Felle (Class of 2021)

## AAPD Certificate Programs

The AAPD Disability Advocacy Certificate Program was established in 2018. In partnership with American University, interns could take the Certificate Program for 3-credits and transfer them to their home university if desired. While participants fulfilled their internship hours Monday to Thursday from 9-to-5, they completed a Certificate Program on Fridays.

The interns who were new to AAPD's Summer Internship Program participated in the Disability Advocacy Certificate Program (the "Advocacy Class"). Since the returning interns completed the AAPD Disability Advocacy Certificate Program in 2020, AAPD developed an advanced course to build on their skills from 2020. This led to the creation of the Disability Policy Certificate Program for the returning participants (the "Policy Class").

## Disability Advocacy Certificate Program

### Course Goal

The Disability Advocacy Certificate Program was offered for 3 hours every Friday for 11 weeks and prepared interns to be knowledgeable and effective advocates and representatives for the disability community in their home communities, states, and on the national level. Interns became familiar with the history of the Disability Rights Movement, using their story to

advocate for the disability community, and a variety of issue areas that impact the disability community.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of the Advocacy Certificate Program, interns:

1. Identified strategies on how to advocate for their community on the local, state, and national level
2. Communicated their story on issues across multiple mediums (e.g. social media, blog posts, policy memos, Hill visits, presentations)
3. Communicated their story to different audiences
4. Described how different legislations impact the disability community on variety of different levels
5. Understood their role and responsibility in the collective disability rights movement

## Topics and Speakers

Interns learned about a variety of topics during the 11-week Advocacy Certificate Program with many speakers. There was a total of 29 speakers. Of those speakers, 90% of our speakers identified as a person with a disability and 72% identified as person of color. We are grateful to all the speakers who shared their time with the interns.

### Week 1: Introduction to Organizing, Advocacy, and Policy

- **Mia Ives-Rublee**, Director of the Disability Justice Initiative, Center for American Progress
- **Patrice Strahan**, Core Member, Disability Justice Culture Club

### Week 2: How to Tell Your Story

- **Day Al-Mohamed, J.D.**, Supervisory Program Analyst, U.S. Department of Labor
- **Diana Cejas, MD MPH**, Assistant Professor--Child Neurology, UNC School of Medicine
- **Jalyn Marks**, Graduate Assistant, Georgetown University
- **Teresa Nguyen, MPH**, Curriculum Developer, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

### Week 3: Education

- **Elijah Armstrong**, Policy Fellow, Youth & Education Privacy (Class of 2018)
- **Maya Branch**, Undergraduate Student, Temple University (Class of 2018)
- **Emily Voorde**, Associate Director, Office of Public Engagement, The White House

### Week 4: Employment

- **Benigno Aceves**, Business Relations Coordinator, Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- **Kathy Martinez**, President/CEO, Disability Rights Advocates
- **Liz Weintraub**, Senior Advocacy Specialist, Association of University Centers on Disabilities

### **Week 5: Healthcare: Home and Community Based Services**

- **Kathy Flaherty**, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc.
- **Latoya Maddox**, Liberty Independent Resource Center
- **Reyma McCoy McDeid**, Executive Director, National Council on Independent Living
- **Ricardo Thornton**, Vice Chairperson, DC Developmental Disability Council, AAPD Board Member

### **Week 6: Disability Vote**

- **Lilian Aluri**, REV UP Voting Campaign Coordinator, AAPD
- **Jalyn Radzinski**, Founder, Count Us Indiana
- **Gaylon Tootle**, Employment Advocate, Walton Options

### **Week 7: Civil Rights: Americans with Disabilities Act**

- **Rabia Belt, J.D. Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Law, Stanford Law
- **Neal Carter**, Founder and Principal, Nu View Consulting
- **Amber Smock**, Director of Advocacy, Access Living

### **Week 8: Relationship Building with Elected Officials**

- **Kathryn Carroll, Esq.**, Disability Training Coordinator, Association on Aging in New York
- **Carlos Martinez, L.M.S.W.**, CEO/Executive Director, BRIDGES
- **Stephanie Woodward, J.D.**, Executive Director, Disability EmpowHer Network (Class of 2009)

### **Week 9: Government Visit Preparations & Mock Visits**

- **Rob Engel**, Professor, AAPD Disability Advocacy Certificate Program
- **DeVan Hankerson, MPP**, Research Manager, Center for Democracy & Technology
- **Mark Martinez**, Legal Counsel and Budget Director, Massachusetts State Senate

### **Week 10: Elected Official Visits**

Interns visited with their elected officials about their chosen issues.

### **Week 11: Final Group Advocacy Plan Presentations**

Topics covered:

- Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
- Individualized Education Plans (IEP)
- Intersecting Oppressions in Society
- Criminal Justice

## **Assignments**

While attending weekly classes, interns completed several assignments to apply and process what they learned with an emphasis on advocacy through storytelling. These assignments included discussion posts, government elected official visits, Portrait of Empowerments, and the final group advocacy project.

## **Discussion Posts**

Every week, each participant answered one of several discussion questions as well as replied to at least two other interns' responses on the learning platform. These discussions created space for the interns to reflect on the lesson as well as have deeper conversations on or beyond the topic.

For example, one of our Week 5 prompts asked the interns, "Why do you think HCBS is a key advocacy area in the Disability Community?" Some responses included:

- It provides independence to members of the disability community who would otherwise be sent to an institution.
- HCBS waivers help with the high costs of services that are necessary for people to stay in their own homes.
- HCBS shows that people with disabilities can thrive with the assistance of community support.
- Bills like HCBS Access Act of 2021 which was formulated by disability-led organizations provide important language about community that are critical for thinking beyond the medical model whereas bills like the Better Care Better Jobs Act emphasize the significance of direct care workers and remain ambiguous on "integrated community".
- Institutionalization should be the last resort or not an option at all.

## **Government Elected Official Visit**

Interns made appointments with their elected officials to discuss an issue or bill of importance to the disability community. The interns met with local, state, and federal elected officials. Prior to their meetings, the interns wrote policy memos that provided details on their issue to share during and after their visit. The interns also wrote blog posts that discussed their process of setting up and meeting with an elected official, the issues they discussed, and any barriers to setting up their meetings.

A few examples of the visits with representatives and their aftermath are:

- Rasheera Dopson met briefly with U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA) who asked for her thoughts on the ADA Modernization Act, which led to her assisting on a project on telehealth expansion for individuals with disabilities.
- Jaelyn Evans met with the Vice President of the Chicago Board of Education to discuss the lack of disability inclusion in their new diversity education policy. Jaelyn is now helping the board look for examples of disability history education in other districts.

## **Portraits of Empowerment**

Interns learned how to tailor their story based on the audience, format, and topic area as a means of advocacy. Interns drafted their stories in a compelling way on social media platforms by creating accessible materials and drafting posts that answered one of two prompts: "When did you first learn about advocacy?" and "Share your story about what the Americans with Disabilities Act means to you."

AAPD shared their stories through the Portraits of Empowerment series. The series included images and quotes from this assignment with the full text shared on AAPD’s website. Thank you to Noah Friedman Studio for designing the graphics for the series. Two examples from the series are below:



“ Although The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD) adopted some disability rights covered under the ADA, the U.S., unfortunately, is one of few countries that has not yet ratified the convention. As a result, this may impact many Americans with disabilities who work, travel, or study abroad. Lack of accessibility abroad limits the educational, professional and recreational opportunities of disabled people.

 **GUSTI BUDIARTA**

*Image Description of Photo 1: A black and white picture of Gusti Budiarta overlaid on a blue square with a white frame. Above the picture and blue square is the AAPD logo and “Portraits of Empowerment” in orange text, and at the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Gusti’s name in orange text.*

*Image Description of Photo 2: A graphic showing a quote that says: “Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) adopted some disability rights covered under the ADA, the U.S., unfortunately, is one of few countries that has not yet ratified the convention. As a result, this may impact many Americans with disabilities who work, travel, or study abroad. Lack of accessibility abroad limits the educational, professional and recreational opportunities of disabled people.” Along the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Gusti Budiarta’s name in orange text.*



“ I never asked to be an advocate. I sort of just became one out of a need—of needing to advocate for my life and equal treatment. I didn’t want to be an advocate, I really just wanted to fit in.

 **RASHEERA DOPSON**

*Image Description of Photo 1: A black and white picture of Rasheera Dopson overlaid on a blue square with a white frame. Above the picture and blue square is the AAPD logo and “Portraits of*



*Empowerment” in orange text, and at the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Rasheera’s name in orange text.*

*Image Description of Photo 2: A graphic showing a quote that says: “I never asked to be an advocate. I sort of just became one out of a need—of needing to advocate for my life and equal treatment. I didn’t want to be an advocate, I really just wanted to fit in.” Along the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Rasheera Dopson’s name in orange text.*

You can view the 2021 Portrait of Empowerment series on [AAPD’s website](#).

### **Final Group Advocacy Plan Project**

Over the course of the summer, four groups of four to five interns collaborated on identifying an issue that impacted the disability community and developed a potential advocacy plan to address the issue. The advocacy plans included history of the issue and how it impacted the disability community, action steps, created materials, and a launch plan. The groups created materials such as websites and infographics, toolkits to relaunch hashtags, plans for roundtable discussions, and more to facilitate action to address the issues impacting the Disability Community. During the last week of class, the intern groups had 30 minutes to present their plans to a wide audience including AAPD staff and Board Members, sponsors, mentors, and internship supervisors.

## [Disability Policy Certificate Program](#)

### **Course Goal**

The Disability Policy Certificate Program was offered for 1.5 hours every Friday for 11 weeks. By the end of the course, interns understood the policymaking process and developed strategies to promote disability rights through policy change.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the Policy Certificate Program, interns:

1. Understood and critically examined fundamental concepts of the public policy process
  - a. Explained how a bill is made into a law
  - b. Provided historical context behind a legislation
  - c. Understood policy implementation and impact, including data and budget
  - d. Supported or opposed a policy with evidence
  - e. Proposed policy recommendations
2. Learned and applied strategies and tools to influence policy making, including how to build a coalition
3. Analyzed public policies with a disability lens

## Topics and Speakers

Interns spent the first half of summer learning about policy and policy analysis and the second half of the summer learning how to apply policy analysis tools and steps to various issue areas that impacted the disability community. Throughout the summer, ten different speakers joined the Policy Class. 90% of the speakers identified as a person with a disability and 50% identified as a person of color. We are grateful to all the speakers who shared their time with the interns.

### **Week 1: How A Bill Becomes a Law**

- **Rob Engel**, Professor, AAPD Disability Advocacy Certificate Program

### **Week 2: Part 1: Policy Analysis - Process**

- **Silvia Yee, J.D.**, Senior Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

### **Week 3: Part 2: Policy Analysis - Diving Deeper into an Example**

- **Laura Weidner**, Vice President of Government Affairs and Advocacy, Epilepsy Foundation

### **Week 4: Part 3: Understanding Policy Impact**

- **Ami Hyten, J.D.**, Executive Director, Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

### **Week 5: Part 4: How to Build a Coalition**

- **Mia Ives-Rublee, M.S.W.**, Director of the Disability Justice Initiative, Center for American Progress
- **Dom Kelly**, Senior Fundraising Manager, Fair Fight Action

### **Week 6: Voting Legislation**

- **Erika Hudson**, Senior Public Policy Analyst, National Disability Rights Network (Class of 2017)

### **Week 7: Home and Community Based Services**

- **Sandy Ho**, Research Project Manager, Community Living Policy Center

### **Week 8: Emergency Preparedness**

- **Valerie Novack**, Disability Policy Fellow, Center for American Progress

### **Week 9: Final Project Discussion/Work Session**

Interns met with their final project group to prepare for their presentation.

### **Week 10: Gun Violence Prevention**

- **Jennifer Longdon**, Representative, Arizona State House of Representatives

### **Week 11: Final Presentation**

Topics covered:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Restoration Act

- Air Carrier Access Amendment Act
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework

## Assignments

To receive the certificate in Disability Policy, interns completed a series of assignments throughout the summer that focused on the process of policy analysis and impact on the disability community. These assignments encouraged the interns to think critically about policy and practice communicating about legislation to varying audiences. The assignments included current events, op-ed, Portrait of Empowerment, and a final group project.

## Current Events

For the Policy Certificate Program participants to better understand how policy can impact their personal lives and communities, groups of interns were asked to identify a news segment or article that covered a relevant legislation. They led a 25-minute informal presentation to their peers where they analyzed the legislation that was being discussed and considered how actions on the policy might affect them and the wider disability community. At the end of their presentation, they posed discussion questions to the class.

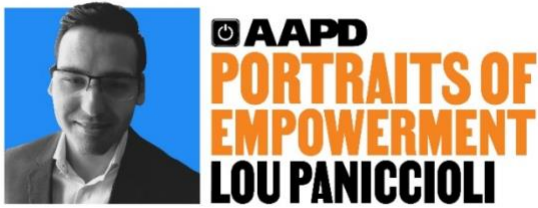
## Op-Ed

The interns practiced developing and communicating arguments about issues impacting the disability community by writing an Op-Ed. The prompt was open to any disability issue if they could make a compelling argument to take action to an audience of their choosing. The topics ranged from accessible transportation to unions for college student workers to legislation addressing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and many other topics. Interns were encouraged to submit their Op-Eds to different publications.

## Portraits of Empowerment

Like the Advocacy Class, the Policy Class was asked to share their story on social media. However, they were prompted to consider how policy influences their day-to-day lives. Their prompts were: “Describe a time when you noticed the impact of policy on your life directly.” and “What is a policy (current or not yet existing) you would like to see enacted in your lifetime?”

Excerpts of the posts were shared on AAPD’s social media as part of the Portraits of Empowerment series again with the full text shared on [AAPD’s website](#). A few examples from the series are below:

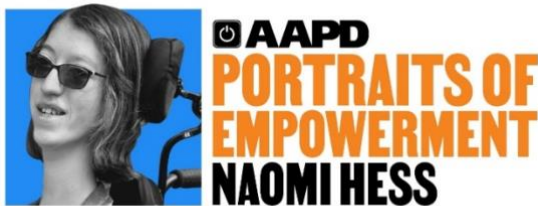


“Guardianship deprives people with disabilities of their rights as human beings. If we are to ensure the autonomy and independence of the disability community, then we must abolish guardianship on a national basis.”

— LOU PANICCIOLI

*Image Descriptions for Photo 1: There is a blue square on the left side of the graphic with a black and white picture of Lou Paniccioli overlaid on the blue square. To the right of the image on a white background is the AAPD logo, “Portraits of Empowerment” in orange text, and Lou’s name in black text.*

*Image Description of Photo 2: A graphic showing a quote that says: “Guardianship deprives people with disabilities of their rights as human beings. If we are to ensure the autonomy and independence of the disability community, then we must abolish guardianship on a national basis.” along the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Lou Paniccioli’s name in black text.*



“I grew up knowing what IEPs and 504s meant, because I was always involved in decision making about how my school could best support my learning and growth.”

— NAOMI HESS

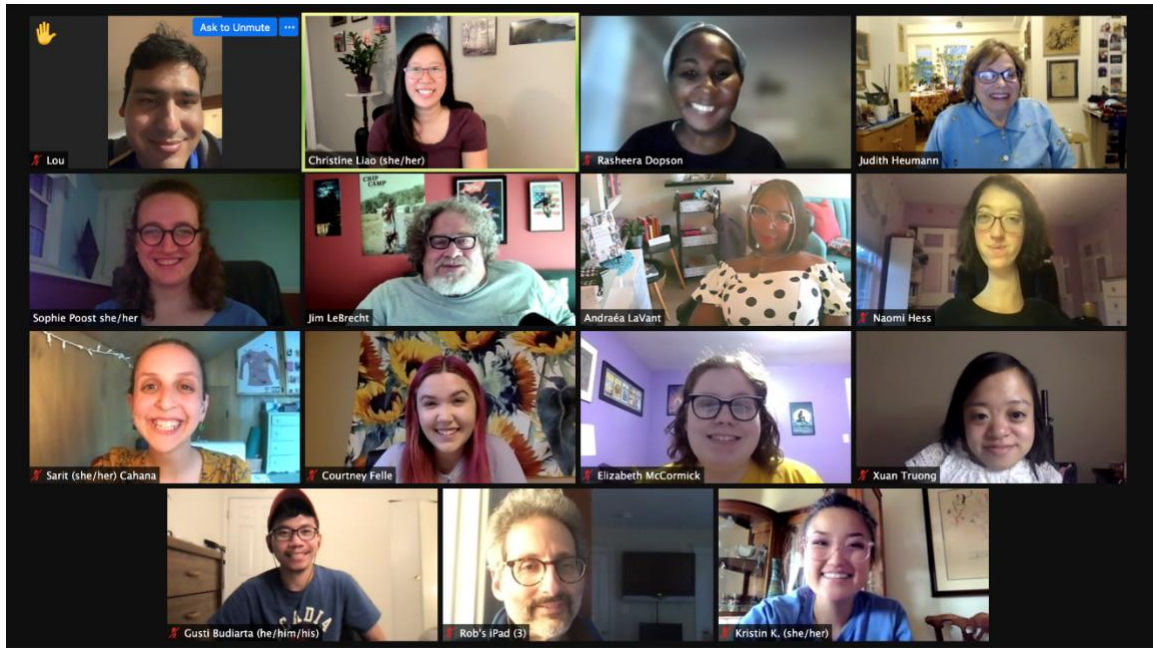
*Image Descriptions for Photo 1: There is a blue square on the left side of the graphic with a black and white picture of Naomi Hess overlaid on the blue square. To the right of the image on a white background is the AAPD logo, “Portraits of Empowerment” in orange text, and Naomi’s name in black text.*

*Image Description of Photo 2: A graphic showing a quote that says: “I grew up knowing what IEPs and 504s meant, because I was always involved in decision making about how my school could best support my learning and growth.” along the bottom is an orange outline of the AAPD power button logo, an orange line, and Naomi Hess’s name in black text.*

### **Final Group Policy Analysis Project**

As the Policy Certificate Class refined their policy analysis skills throughout the course, they were split into three groups of three people to analyze and present on a current or past policy that impacts the disability community. During the last week of class, the intern groups had 30 minutes to present their analysis which included the history of the bill, identifying the support and opposition of a legislation, how to build a coalition and partnerships to take action, consider the policy impact including data, population, and budget, and developed policy

recommendations based on their research. An invitation was extended to AAPD staff and Board Members, sponsors, mentors, and internship supervisors to watch the presentations.



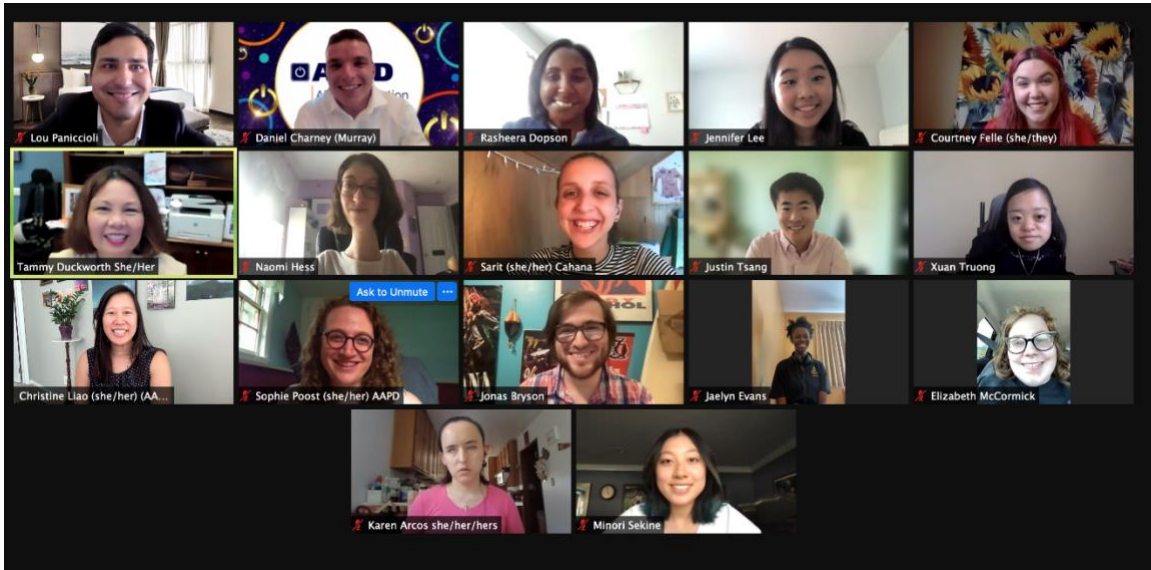
## Community Events

AAPD provided weekly opportunities to the interns throughout the summer for connection on various topics of interest that were not covered in the Certificate Program and often invited outside speakers to answer questions or facilitate the conversations. Some of these opportunities included:

- **Workshop on Policy Memo 101**, Stephanie DeLuca, Ph.D., Legislative Assistant, Office of Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)
- **Discussion on Disability & Dating**, Shane & Hannah Burcaw, Squirmy & Grubs YouTube Channel
- **Panel on Intersectionality of Disability & Queer Communities**, Lydia X. Z. Brown, Esq., Directory of Policy, Advocacy, & External Affairs, Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (Class of 2013); Allie Cannington, Manager, Advocacy and Organizing, The Kelsey (Class of 2012); D'Arcee Neal, PhD Student, Ohio State University (Class of 2013)
- **Panel with the Team Behind *Crip Camp***, Judy Heumann; Andraea LaVant, Impact Producer, Netflix's *Crip Camp*, and President & Chief Inclusion Officer, LaVant Consulting, Inc; Jim LeBrecht, Co-Director and Co-Producer, *Crip Camp*
- **Discussion with Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)**
- **Discussion with Maria Town, President & CEO of AAPD**



- **Panel with AAPD Board Members**, Joyce Bender, President & CEO, Bender Consulting Services, Inc.; Jackie Puente, Executive Director of External Affairs, Comcast NBCUniversal; Will Ris, Retired from American Airlines



In addition to these structured get togethers, the interns have worked together through their internships to effect change. Some examples include:

- Danny Charney (Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)) and Katy Brennan (Senate HELP Committee) coordinated efforts to advocate for Senator Murray to cosponsor The Supplemental Security Income Restoration Act.
- Katy Brennan (Senate HELP Committee), Elizabeth McCormick (AUCD), Fermina Lopez (APSE), and Xuan Truong (NDRN) have been working within the coalition of their internship placements to develop materials on 14(c) Certificates and subminimum wage advocacy.

Our interns also have been involved in the broader disability community efforts. Here were some external activities that our interns have been doing:

- Rasheera Dopson had Jennifer Lee and Kristin Kumagawa on her podcast *WomanHood & Disability* for “[Episode #6 Cross Cultural Conversations](#)” where they discussed disability experiences in Asian American Cultures.
- Lou Paniccioli and his mentor Hamza Jaka (Class of 2011) joined Maria Town on July 20th for a panel on inclusive mentorship at a virtual congressional briefing in partnership with MENTOR, Partners for Youth with Disabilities, and National Disability Mentoring Coalition.
- Several of the interns (returning and new) are currently compiling their narratives to self-publish a book.
- Jennifer Lee is working with Justin Tsang, Lou Paniccioli, Kristin Kumagawa, Xuan Truong, and Kelly Moh on the [Asian Americans with Disabilities Initiative](#) (AADI), a youth-led community aiming to uplift disabled Asian American voices. They hosted a



panel discussion on Friday, August 13. One of the speakers at the event included Lydia Brown (Class of 2013).

The interns also had additional social gatherings led by either AAPD staff or the interns where they had the opportunity to discuss their internships, disability experience, education, accessibility during the pandemic, and more.

### Intern Cohort Testimonials

*“One of my favorite parts of the internship was connecting with my fellow interns. They were all so committed to this space, and it was so nice to be amongst people that truly understood disability, as I do not have many opportunities to enter disability-specific spaces.”*

— Monica Mesecar

*“Through probing questions from AAPD staff and interns, I realize how much cohort members have to contribute to the disability community. This internship experience is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of all that interns may contribute to the future.”*

— Karen Arcos

*“I’m so grateful to have a community of peers who are interested in disability advocacy work. This is something I’ve been looking for a long time.”*

— Sarit Cahana

*“Aside from being able to work in a newly widely known U.S. Senator’s office (Jon Ossoff), my favorite part was honestly the GroupMe chat with the other AAPD interns. Having that camaraderie during the summer was such a breath of fresh air. I know I’ve made so many amazing new friends.”*

— Rasheera Dopson

### Internship Placements

AAPD extends our gratitude to our 2021 placement partners for hosting remote interns for the first time with us. This summer would not have been possible without their commitment to disability inclusion and providing a meaningful experience for our interns this summer.

Placement sites marked with an asterisk were new partners for 2021.

**Congressional Offices:**



Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD)



Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)



Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA)\*



Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)\*



Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)



Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

**Federal Agencies:**



National Council on Disability



Smithsonian Institution's Arts+ Industries Building\*



U.S. Access Board



U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environment, Health, Safety, & Security



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Office of Federal Operations



U.S. International Council on Disability



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Community Living



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Community Planning and Development\*



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Multifamily Housing\*

**Nonprofit Agencies:**



American Association for the Advancement of Science\*



Association of People Supporting Employment First



Association of University Centers on Disabilities



Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network\*



Center for American Progress



Disability:IN



Disability EmpowHer Network\*



National Disability Rights Network



The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights



The Paul K. Longmore Institute



World Institute on Disability\*

**Private Companies:**

The Anthem logo is written in a large, blue, serif font with a registered trademark symbol (®) at the end.

Anthem, Inc.

The Centene Corporation logo features the word "CENTENE" in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol (®). Below it, the word "Corporation" is written in a smaller, grey, serif font.

Centene Corporation

At their placement sites, many interns authored articles and policy memos, developed infographics, and participated in various other projects. A few examples are:

- Several interns wrote blog posts about the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Catalina Romero wrote on The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' blog about how [she navigated the disability stigma her entire life](#). Courtney Felle reflected on [celebrating and looking beyond the ADA 31 anniversary](#) in a blog for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living. Lastly, Kelly Moh co-authored an article: [The ADA at 31: Access to Housing and Health Care Must Meet the Rise of Disability in the U.S.](#) while interning with Center for American Progress.
- Courtney Felle wrote a [paper, "Medicaid HCBS Waivers: Standards for Design and Assessment"](#) while interning with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living.
- Two of our interns recorded podcasts during their internship placements. Xuan Truong spent her internship at National Disability Rights Network focusing on competitive employment for people with disabilities which she discussed on an episode of the [PandA podcast](#). Fermina Lopez, also discussed employment on [an episode of the podcast, APSE Conversations](#) at Association for People Supporting Employment First.
- Justin Tsang interned with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and during his time there he created a brochure titled, ["Your Resident Rights: Public Housing vs. RAD"](#).
- During Jennifer Lee's placement in the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, she wrote a [policy memo on the Accessible Voting Act of 2021](#).



## Supervisor Testimonials

*“Bruno Arnold was my first very exceptional intern who exceeded the duties and tasks required of him in the office. While it was slow in the beginning due to technical issues, that did not stop Bruno from growing and excelling and asking for more work to get done.”*

— Joseph Fernandez (Senator Mark Warner, intern: Bruno Matthew Arnold)

*“Hosting Riah for a summer internship helped reinforce AWN's personal commitment to horizontal organizing and how it contributes to an organizational framework grounded in disability justice.”*

— Sharon DaVanport (Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, intern: Mariah “Riah” Person)

*“I continue to greatly enjoy hosting AAPD summer interns at our organization. I feel like I learn as much from them over the course of the summer as they may learn from us.”*

— Eric Buehlmann (National Disability Rights Network, intern: Xuan Truong)

## Intern Placement Testimonials

*“Anthem was a fantastic internship placement site because I didn't feel like an intern--in the best way! I could tell that my team really valued my contributions and opinions, and I knew that the work I did was meaningful.”*

— Monica Mesecar (Anthem, Inc)

*“Interning at the Senate HELP Committee was an even better experience than I could have hoped for. This is even more impressive when considering my placement was virtual. I always had tasks to do, both short term and long-term projects. These tasks never felt mundane or like busy work; they were clearly deliverables which would directly impact the disability community, and the work was incredibly exciting. [...] I am so thankful to my committee and to AAPD for this experience.”*

— Katy Brennan (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions)

*“Senator Warner’s Vienna Office was an amazing placement. Everyone wants to work in the DC office, but I worked in the DC and the state office. I found out that I enjoyed being closer to the constituents and helping them in the state office. A lot of the work in the state offices influences the policies in the DC office. You can make an impact wherever you are so don’t pick what looks good, try everything you can and then choose what you love to do.”*

— Bruno Matthew Arnold (Senator Mark Warner, D-VA)

*“I am grateful to both AAPD and to the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s (AAAS) STEMM Equity achievement (SEA) Change team. Both places created such welcoming environments. Through AAAS, I’ve met individuals who’ve given me a sense of the breadth of career paths open to me with my neuroscience background. I look forward to continuing my involvement with SEA Change and AAAS post-internship as well!”*

— Karen Arcos (American Association for the Advancement of Science)

*“Working in a Senator’s office was a dream internship for me. Knowing that a person with a disability like myself can complete an internship on the same level as those without disabilities made me confident in my future success in life. Thank you, Senator Murray’s office and AAPD!”*

— Danny Charney (Senator Patty Murray, D-WA)

*“APSE [was] a great opportunity to learn about challenges and barriers people with disabilities face entering the workforce. I love to help people within my community reach career goals and APSE Employment First movement has shown me how to help people with disabilities reach their career goals. My Supervisor at APSE connected me with my local office and I am already connecting people at my school to this great organization.”*

— Fermina Lopez (Association of People Supporting Employment First)

## Mentors

We are deeply appreciative of all the mentors who supported our AAPD interns this past summer.

**Kara Ayers**, Associate Director, University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

**Zachary Basitan**, Manager, Strategic Alliances, Verizon

**Beth Bienvenu**, Accessibility Director, National Endowment for the Arts

**Lydia Brown**, Directory of Policy, Advocacy, & External Affairs, Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (Class of 2013)

**Kelly Buckland**, Retired Former Executive Director, National Council on Independent Living

**Patrick Cokley**, Disability Policy Engagement Manager, Anthem, Inc.

**Kristin Duquette**, National Security Fellow, Truman National Security Project (Class of 2013)

**Kings Floyd**, Researcher, The White House

**Vivian Fridas**, Public Policy Specialist, National Industries for the Blind

**Merrill Friedman**, RVP, Inclusive Policy & Advocacy, Anthem, Inc.

**Katherine Guernsey**, Agency Disability Rights Coordinator, U.S. Agency for International Development

**Conchita Hernandez**, Statewide Low Incidence Specialist, The Maryland School for the Blind

**Eric Harris**, Director of Public Policy, Disability Rights California (Class of 2013)

**Judy Heumann**, Disability Rights Advocate

**Andy Imparato**, Executive Director, Disability Rights California

**Mia Ives-Rublee**, Director of Disability Justice Initiative, Center for American Progress

**Hamza Jakka**, Attorney, GKWW and Willenson Law (Class of 2011)

**Angelina Joliner**, US. Education Sr. Marketing Manager, Microsoft

**Crystal Jones**, Support Delivery PM, Microsoft (Class of 2011)

**Mathew McCollough**, Director, Office of Disability Rights

**Jamelia Morgan**, Assistant Professor of Law, University of California Irvine Law

**Jalyn Radzminski**, Founder, Count US Indiana

**Cara Reedy**, Program Manager, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund's Media Alliance Project

**Maddy Ruvolvo**, Transportation Planner, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (Class of 2013)

**Justice Shorter**, Disaster Protection Advisor, National Disability Rights Network

**Frances West**, Founder, FrancesWestCo

**Stephanie Woodward**, Executive Director, Disability EmpowHer Network (Class of 2009)

## Mentor Testimonials

*“For young, disabled advocates, it's easy to feel like the only one in the room during many of our political and professional opportunities. Through this program, it gives us a space to lift each other up to not only navigate but build the world of advocacy and the inclusive communities that we need.”*

— Jalyn Radziminski

*“Mentoring is a dual learning experience - one where the mentee can benefit from a mentor's experience and where the mentor can learn from a new generation while reviewing the lessons that lead to success.”*

— Patrick Cokley

*“I very much enjoyed working with my mentee, who was wonderful! I appreciated his being very intentional and thoughtful in selecting topics for our regular discussions. Most of our discussions focused on advice for young professionals looking to forge a career in disability-inclusive development. I hope that I was able to offer him advice from my own experience that will assist him - he has a great career ahead of him!”*

— Katherine Guernsey

## Mentee Testimonials

*“It was super helpful for me to tell my mentor about my interests and get personalized advice on my long-term goals. I appreciated the opportunity to connect with someone who I've admired for her advocacy for a long time.”*

— Naomi Hess

*“It was so empowering that my mentor was a leader in their own right in the disability community. I loved that I could connect with another Asian American and discuss all these multifaceted components of my identity.”*

— Jennifer Lee

*“The mentoring experience is a great way to ask people who have experienced your struggles how they navigated their professional and personal lives. They will help you to understand the areas you are apprehensive about in your future.”*

— Bruno Matthew Arnold

*“My mentoring experience is the best way to get local career support. My mentor has connected me with several career opportunities.”*

— Fermina Lopez

## Evaluation

At the conclusion of the Summer Internship Program, 25 out of 28 AAPD interns filled out a final evaluation. When providing percentages below, we are only including the ones that responded to the survey. Below, we share some of the data from the final evaluation.

Interns responded to questions related to the Summer Internship Program goals.

- 100% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:
  - I am more confident in my ability to be a leader in the disability community since the beginning of the Summer Internship Program.
  - The Summer Internship Program helped me develop more connections in the disability community.
- 96% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:
  - The Summer Internship Program helped me develop a stronger peer network.
  - The Summer Internship Program has been valuable for my career development.
- 100% of the respondents would recommend the Summer Internship Program to others.

Interns had the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their placement site.

- 100% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they gained skills and knowledge that they will be able to apply at future internships/jobs.
- 96% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:
  - The internship helped me understand different career options.
  - The internship helped me in pursuit of future opportunities.
- Regarding participating in a completely remote internship, 40% interns responded that a remote internship was more accessible than an in-person internship. 44% interns indicated that a remote internship was just as accessible as an in-person internship. Lastly, 16% interns shared that a remote internship was less accessible than an in-person internship.

When we asked about their cohort, 96% of the interns strongly agreed and agreed that their cohort felt like their community. In addition, 96% of the interns said they will stay in touch with members of their cohort after the internship program.



Since every AAPD intern is paired with a mentor, 96% of the interns indicated they strongly agreed or agreed that their mentor was a good match for them. 92% of the interns plan to stay in touch with their mentor after the AAPD Summer Internship Program.

For the Disability Policy Certificate Program, 9 out of 9 interns responded to questions related to their learning during the course. 100% of the policy interns strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:

- I can explain how a bill is made into a law.
- I understand why it is important to know the historical context of a bill.
- I understand how policy implementation and impact can be different from the intent of the bill.
- I understand the importance of being able to share evidence to support and oppose a bill.
- I understand what evidence and information is needed to make a policy recommendation.
- I understand the importance of coalition building and its impact on policies.
- I can analyze policy with a disability lens.

For the Disability Advocacy Certificate Program, 16 out of 19 interns responded to questions related to their learning during the course. 100% of the advocacy interns strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:

- I can identify different ways to advocate on the local, state, and national level.
- I understand my role and responsibility in the collective disability rights movement.
- I feel empowered with knowledge and strategies to advocate for the advancement of disability rights broadly defined.

## Alumni Spotlight

**Name:** Sabrina Epstein

**Internship Class Year:** 2019

**Internship Placement Site:** National Endowment for the Arts

Sabrina has been heavily involved with critical work in ensuring that the disability community has access to necessary information regarding COVID-19 vaccines. Earlier in 2021, in collaboration between the Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center and the Center for Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities, Sabrina worked on the creation of the [COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization for People with Disabilities Dashboard](#), which tracks vaccine prioritization across four disability-related categories through Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center.



**Name:** Keri Gray  
**Internship Class Year:** 2011  
**Internship Placement Site:** Office of Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi



As the founder of the NAMD Advocates, Keri and her team works to equip disabled Black and Brown leaders with necessary skills that drive measurable impact in their programs and across their organizations. The NAMD Advocates' network supports the leadership of Black and Brown disabled advocates, change agents, entrepreneurs, and communicators. We support leaders in building collective strength and we share fundamental strategies to individuals that work to enhance the social, political, and economic standards of their communities. For more information, check out [the Keri Gray Goup's website](#).

**Name:** Eric Harris  
**Internship Class Year:** 2013  
**Internship Placement Site:** America Institutes for Research



Earlier this year, Eric was [promoted to the Director of Policy at Disability Rights California](#) (DRC). In this role, Eric is integral in pushing for action through DRC's [Advocacy Platform](#). Eric has worked with Disability Rights California in legislation and strategic partnerships and community engagement for two years prior to being selected for this position.

**Name:** Emily Ladau  
**Internship Class Year:** 2013  
**Internship Placement Site:** Association of University Centers on Disabilities



Emily wrote a book, [Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to be an Ally](#). Emily's book is "An approachable guide to being a thoughtful, informed ally to disabled people, with actionable steps for what to say and do (and what not to do) and how you can help make the world a more inclusive place." It was released on September 7, 2021 by publisher Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

## Thank You to Our Generous 2021 Supporters!

We extend our deepest gratitude to our 2021 supporters to offer AAPD's first ever virtual Summer Internship Program.

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