

Carlos Vazquez
Week 2, June 18-24

As week 2, quickly approached we started this new week by heading to the Smithsonian's National Zoo Sunday morning. Before coming to DC, I remember watching videos on YouTube on what to do in the city and when I found out that there was a zoo with pandas in it; it soon was on the top of my bucket list. Visiting the zoo was an exciting way to spend the day before our first official day of work.

On Monday, we all officially started our first day at our sites. My roommate Jose and I are both placed under the same office in the Department of Education so it is helpful to have someone to go to work with every day. At work, I was placed under the Office of School Support and Rural Programs (SSRP), I did not know that I would be placed in this specific office because I thought that I was going to be under the Office of Migrant Education (OME). Although I was surprised by the change of office, I believe that I will be able to gain a lot from my internship in the SSRP. I come from a very rural area and have firsthand experience with the struggles of schools in rural communities. I believe having this experience makes me a real asset to the office because whenever possible I can give real input on how students are affected in these schools. Most importantly, I know I am playing a role in helping the small communities that have helped me grow into who I am today.

After our first day of work, Lisa Ramirez the Director of both OME and SSRP, invited the HEP/CAMP interns to the Presidential Scholar performance in the Kennedy Center. Going to this event was amazing because it gave us a chance to see some truly talented individuals give a great performance and best of all the entire event was free! What really stood out the first week was just how much effort the Department of Education puts into giving their interns the most out of our experience. One of the visits the Department set up for the interns was a tour to the Supreme Court. Of course, this was my first time going to the Supreme Court so I was astonished to think that I was in a location that has largely impacted our nation's history.

On Tuesday, we were all invited to an ice cream social that was hosted by Charles Schumer's Senate Diversity Initiative. Aside from the delicious (free!) ice cream, it was so powerful to be in a room that was just filled with diversity. In Washington DC, it is easy to see that there are not many minorities that work on The Hill or many diverse students participating in internships. This is why I feel so lucky to be surrounded by all of these individuals who are facing similar obstacles as I am. I am happy to see programs such as the Senate Diversity Initiative is striving to make a change into the lack of diversity in DC. What also made this event so special were the Senators who came to speak to us throughout the program. Senators Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker, and Charles Schumer himself came to greet us all and give us some words of inspiration. After hearing their speeches, I truly felt empowered knowing there are Senators that care about issues such as these, it also makes me and many others strive to truly make our country diverse and great.

What makes this experience so great is the balance our work life with the adventures that are provided with the city. It amazes me just how much there is to do here because every time I think that I have almost seen it all, another ten things pop up that I have to check out. I am very

fortunate to be in a cohort that is so willing to go out and explore because it always leads us to some crazy adventures. On Saturday for example, our schedule was filled with plans such as visiting the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of Natural History followed by a night tour of the monuments. I have most often visited the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial but somehow every time I end up going again, and I always find something new to appreciate.

Overall, it is almost upsetting to think that we are already a quarter of the way finished with our time here in DC. These two weeks have been treating me very well and I really look forward to all the things that I will gain from in my workplace and outside the office.



