

Carlos Vazquez

DC Journal Week 7

I mentioned in my journal last week that my final two weeks here in DC would consist of many more memories and so far, I have been completely right. The days go by quick and my time here is running short; while the thought of going home both excites and saddens me, I feel that I will be able to leave this city with a smile on my face for all that I was able to experience in my time here.

On Sunday, Jose and I were fortunate enough to spend time with a HEP/CAMP intern from last summer, Jasmine Meraz. Jasmine was returning from her study abroad session in Uganda and her flight brought her to Washington DC for about 8 hours. She had reached out to me a week prior to let me know whether it would be possible to meet with the cohort for a couple of hours so we arranged to go eat at the restaurant, "Los Hermanos," and chat about our internship experiences. I really enjoyed the fact that the alumni were still willing to reach out to us, I'm sure that she knew people in the city from last summer but the fact that she dedicated her time to meet with us was such a genuine move it really makes me want to stay involved with the association once I finish my internship term.

Going into work on Monday was a little bittersweet for me because I knew that this would be my last official week in the office. I remember how I felt going into the Department of Education exactly 5 weeks before and how nervous I felt to start work but now here I was walking to my cubicle for the last week. On Monday after work was also a really exciting day for me because I was able to fulfil my childhood dream of going to watch a live WWE Monday Night RAW show. Gloria, Lupe, and I had discussed going to this event very early on in the summer but never really made it official for us to go until that same day. I remember sitting at lunch with Jose and Chris and jokingly saying "Yeah, I'm going to probably go watch WWE today," but after saying that I figured that I actually really wanted to go so I messaged to other interns and it turns out that they were still willing to go! Although I had not kept up with the show in years which caused me to be very lost throughout it all, I was still extremely entertained with the entire night. I really felt like a 10 year old again whenever any familiar wrestler would come out on the stage.

Tuesday was another very exciting day at the Department of Education because they had arranged for the interns to go get a tour at the White House! Going inside of the White House was one of the many things that I was hoping to do over my 8 weeks here in Washington. So, the fact that the Department was able to arrange that for us really made me feel fortunate to be placed in a building that cares for their interns. While the tour itself was not very long, I was still really amazed to even be inside the building, espically one of the most iconic and historic buildings in our Nation. I remember the first day in DC when Patrick took us to the White House because he knew that we were all excited to see it even if it was from outside the fence, but on Tuesday I was able to get the view from the inside.

Wednesday was another really interesting day because the Department of Education had also scheduled for the interns to have lunch with the Secretary of Education, Betsy Devos. The meeting was a pretty quick one, we only introduced ourselves and she answered about two questions and we then went on to take individual pictures so that was pretty exciting to say. I had sat about two seats to her left so I was really surprised to find myself sitting five feet away from the Secretary of Education.

The highlight of the week was by far our CHCI Graduation on Thursday, this was one of those events that you really look forward to for weeks and to think that it had already arrived was so exciting! This was one of those events that I was able to look around the room and see a room filled with accomplished people, so to be able to be a part of it all filled me with pride. The ceremony itself was amazing especially because we had some representatives such as Luis Gutierrez, Joaquin Castro, Ruben Kihuen, Tony Cardenas, Peter Aguilar and many others! The fact that they took the time to come to our ceremony and give us a speech that felt so genuine, made me feel that they truly cared about our futures and they want to see more Latinx leaders in our communities and in our country.

Graduating from the Congressional Hispanic Causus Insitute gives me such a high honor but it really makes me appreciate the HEP/CAMP association for bringing me and the six other extraordinary interns here for this amazing oppurtunity. Being a part of this pushes me to want to go back to my campus and continue to strive and make the changes that our communities in Idaho need. To be able to build both my professional and leadership skills the way that this program was able to, is something that I will not let go to waste. Not only was being a part of CHCI one of the biggest highlights for me, I feel that I built some of my closest friendships with those within in the cohort and that is something that I am going to cherish for a long time.

With one more week left I am filled with so many emotions. I cannot wait to see how the eighth week will turn out, the one that I have had marked on my calendar for weeks has finally arrived. I knew I would enjoy my time here, but counting down the days for me to leave the family away from home in the CHCI cohort is really upsetting. My final week in DC equals the final memories to be made. For now, that is.



The food was SO delicious!!



Only paid \$20 but got great seats



Photo in the entrance of the White House

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/128781046@N08/36200675671/in/album-72157684505694113/>





