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Class of 2016
2015 Internship Report

2015 Internship with No Labels

During the summer of 2014, I interned on Capitol Hill for my congressman from home, Kurt Schrader. I knew after only a few days of work that I had found my niche, and I started thinking of internships I could pursue to ensure I would be back in DC this summer.

Congressman Schrader is a prominent member in an organization called No Labels. I became familiar with their work during last summer and ultimately accepted an internship with them this year.

No Labels was launched in 2010, by a bipartisan group of political and business leaders and is spearheaded by experienced political fundraisers. Their message is simple, “stop fighting, start fixing”. No Labels seeks to reduce gridlock in Congress by helping to create and implement legislation that is introduced and sponsored by members of both parties. In the last five years, No Labels has grown rapidly. There are now over 100 college chapters of the organization across the country, 500,000 citizen supporters, and they have the third largest caucus in the House and active offices in both Iowa and New Hampshire. Last year, the group crafted and passed the “No Work, No Pay” bill, which prevents Members of Congress from receiving a paycheck in the event of a government shut down. No Labels is currently focusing much of their efforts in New Hampshire due to the state’s early primary and the opportunity to encourage their large number of undeclared voters to elect a candidate who is willing to work with members of the opposite party.

When I started my internship, I was one of twenty-seven interns, and I soon realized there were more interns than full time employees. Interns were allocated to different offices: finance, political, press, digital, and networks. I began working in the networks department which involved calls and contact with citizen supporters. However, it quickly became clear to me that there were not enough duties for interns in this area, and I observed that no one was really handling the college program, which meant that many emails were going unread. Staff turnover had left this position open, and a national college director had yet to be hired. College chapter leaders desperately needed greater support from No Labels headquarters. Also, it was mentioned that many of our largest donors and our National Co-Chair, Senator Joe Lieberman, want a greater focus on growing college chapters and engaging young people in the No Labels message. There was tremendous support for growth of the college chapters, yet a desperate need for consistent organization from headquarters.

Thus, I began to take over much of the communication with college chapter leaders, updating them on our work in Washington. I also requested a meeting with our CEO, Nancy Jacobson, to talk about some ideas I had to grow the college program. Overhauling the No Labels College program quickly became my new role as an intern. Throughout the summer I planned and executed two events for college interns in DC to recruit new leaders, and I was given a minimal budget for both. One was in the Capitol Building for Hill interns and another was a casual mixer called “Beer, BBQ and Bipartisanship”. I filled both spaces to capacity and talked with over 200 college students about the No Labels message and how to organize a chapter on their college campus.

During the ten weeks of my internship I fully implemented a new college chapter system, created a starter box for new chapters, lead a meeting with our CEO and Executive Director and over thirty chapter leaders from across the country, and created an incentive structure and program for growing chapters. In order to accomplish this, I had to create numerous budget proposals and convince the leaders of No Labels that college programs are worthy of a greater budget and a full time staff in DC. At the end of my internship, I was offered a position with No Labels that I will be taking on throughout the school year. This includes managing half of the campus program, planning and coordinating the travel of 100 collegiate leaders to New Hampshire, and also running a training program for them in NH with Senator Joe Lieberman and Governor John Huntsman.

Through my internship with No Labels, I learned that you cannot wait for someone to give you a job to do, you must see where there are holes in an organization and be the one to fill them. Coming to work on time and fulfilling your tasks are basic expectations. Since most of the staffers in our office did not even know the interns names, it was crucial that I did more than what was simply expected of me to stand out. People will listen to your ideas if you are the person who stays late and does the work that no one else wants to do in order to complete a task. I learned that “ a no” can become “a yes”; that sometimes you just have to pitch the same things in different ways until they stick. Perhaps the greatest gain of my internship was learning to be confident and entrepreneurial. No one is going to invite you to come sit down at the table. You have to pull up a chair yourself.