

# Here's my Study Abroad Story

## Jessica Ortiz Garcia CMC Washington Program Internship: U.S. Department of State

**Major:** Government/Spanish Dual

**Program:** The CMC Washington DC Program headquarters is conveniently placed in the center of town, about a ten minute walk away from the White House. The office space provides students with a spacious classroom, kitchen, a computer lab, and a multitude of comfortable chairs and sofas. Running to class after work, students usually head over to the kitchen to heat up some leftover lunch, or go to the cupboard that Dr. Spalding generously restocks with healthy and delicious snacks to tide us over before dinner. While students are living and working in a big city far from the bubble of campus, I felt just as supported in DC as I do in Claremont. If students ever have any concerns or questions, Dr. Spalding is there to help with anything a student might need, whether it's about class or the internship. Professor Haskell goes out of his way to meet with students, as does Professor Wolfson, if a student has any concerns about the research paper. The classes provided by the DC program are rigorous and extremely interesting. Even after a long day at the office, the discussions in class were animated and riveting. The program provides excursions for the students; during my time in DC we went to Gettysburg and the Supreme Court. Both were phenomenal trips that added to my experience and gave me the opportunity to visit locations that I wouldn't have otherwise. Living in DC itself provides many cultural and educational experiences.



**Typical Day:** : My alarm would go off at 7:00 am Monday-Friday. I would get myself ready, prep my lunch, and wish my three roommates a wonderful day before I would head out. I would walk to the subway station and join the mass of suits waiting to board the train.

After exiting the metro station I would make the long trek between the station and the Department of State offices where I would begin the day's work. Afterwards, twice a week, I would head over to the DC office for my evening classes. And after a long day of work or work/class I would head home and eat dinner, tired but ready to start the next day. On the weekends I would take time to complete assignments and reading, and I would make a point to study at a museum or some other public place. There's nothing like sitting and reading at the top of the stairs of the Lincoln Memorial.

**Highlights:** The holiday dinner hosted by Dr. Spalding and her family, and the informal gatherings that my cohort planned. The Spalding family hosted a wonderful dinner gathering, and made the cohort feel like part of the family. Not to mention the fact that Dr. Spalding's children are so welcoming, charismatic, and charming. While the prospect of being in a big city can seem lonely, my group made a huge effort to socialize together. I spent just as much time in the houses of others as I did in my own house. Because I went to DC in the fall, we planned a holiday dinner, where we ate good food and had a good time. We also did a gift exchange. It was a wonderful experience that brought the group together, where we got to know each other a little bit better. I also really enjoyed spending Thanksgiving with my boss and her family and friends. It was a great deal of fun and I got to know her better.



**Challenges:** I would say that getting up early every weekday was a struggle, but it was all worth it, especially because I loved my internship. My work environment was fun and rigorous.

**Advice:** Do not pass up the opportunity to attend all of the Smithsonian museums, which are FREE, and spend a lot of time walking around the city in awe of all the monuments and statues found everywhere. Never stand still on the right side of the escalator or you will be shoved aside by the mass of people trying to get to work on time.