

# Here's my Study Abroad Story

## Mackenzie Dallas The Washington Program U.S. Small Business Administration

**Major:** International Relations

**Program:** The DC Program is formally made up of two parts: the internship and the classes. Once accepted into the DC program you must find your own internship for the semester. Internships must be full time positions, but can be in whatever field you are interested in. The internship counts as a class. On top of this you have three other classes: a research paper and two standard classes. The research paper is written on a subject of your choosing generally about the government, however other areas are allowed if you are trying to get credit for another major. This class meets only a few times throughout the semester to talk about research strategy and to present your preliminary paper. The other two classes meet once a week for two hours. One is generally a domestic policy class and the other is an international policy class. These classes function like normal seminar classes with lots of reading and some papers. During my time in DC, my roommates and I discovered that there is a third part to the DC Program, which is DC itself. This city is amazing and has so many opportunities (museums, sites, and events) that greatly influence a semester spent in the city.

**Typical Day:** On weekdays I would wake up between 6:30 and 7:00 am, get ready for work, pack a lunch if I hadn't done so the night before, and then head out the door around 7:30 am to walk to the metro. My metro ride took 15-20 minutes and I would get to work at 8:00 am. Every morning I had a quick team meeting with my boss to run through what we were working on, prioritize, and assign projects. The rest of my day I spent in my office (yes, I mean office, not cubicle; it even had a window!) working on various tasks. My work day ended at 6:00 pm. If I had class I would rush out the door to try and get to the classroom as fast as possible. Class started at 6:30 pm, and during rush hour getting from my office to the classroom could take a while. Class went for two hours, after which I would walk back to my apartment with my roommates. We generally got back to our apartment by 9:15 pm. After class I would eat a late dinner/snack and relax.



On the nights where I didn't have class I would head back to my apartment or out with friends for dinner and then relax and do homework. The weekdays became very routine and were tiring. On the weekends my friends and I would explore DC. A regular weekend trip would be to Eastern Market for the farmers market/craft fair/antique shopping. It was always fun. Another great place that we frequently visited was Georgetown. In addition, there is always one group trip put on by the program during the semester. We went to Gettysburg! In addition to fun on the weekends, I also did most of my grocery shopping, other chores, and spent a lot of time doing homework and research for my independent research paper.



**Highlights:** My biggest work highlights include my meetings at the White House and working on and being included in the a presentation for the CIO of the United States! I also enjoyed the Holiday Party (complete with a gift exchange and an overwhelming amount of decorations) that we threw for the DC group, as well as generally getting to hang out with the DC crew. The people on the program really made the experience great!

**Challenges:** The adjustment wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. That said, with a very busy schedule it was easy to get worn down. It was important for me to figure out how to balance work, school, homework, going out, and taking care of myself. Living in such a small apartment came with many stresses, most importantly, never having personal space.

These issues were resolved by being open and communicating well with my roommates.

**Advice:** Use the CMC resources. By this I mean talk to people to help with your applications, talk to current students to find housing, use current students and alumni to find an internship, take advantage of Dr. Spalding for EVERYTHING; she is the best and has a lot of great advice. Everyone wants your experience to be the best it can be, so don't be afraid of reaching out to anyone. People love to talk about DC!

