Q: Describe the Leland Fellows program.
A: Historically, economically disadvantaged minority students could rarely pursue employment opportunities as congressional staff members due to the reality that internships — the primary recruitment avenue — are available only to those who can financially afford to live in Washington, D.C. These expenses, plus loss of income from a local job, place this opportunity beyond the reach of many students. Unlike the vast majority of Washington internships, the Leland Fellows program provides a monthly stipend, paid housing and round-trip airfare. Upon successful completion of the program, interns earn 3-12 credit hours toward their degree plan. The University of Houston Hobby Center for Public Policy (HCPP) directs the program.

The Leland Fellows program offers many benefits:
- Creates a "real world" working environment for students interested in public service
- Develops valuable job skills
- Enhances interpersonal abilities
- Provides opportunities to meet professionals involved in government and related areas
- Presents networking and mentorship opportunities
- Promotes ties between the academic community with the public sector

Q: What kind of time commitment is required?
A: Leland Fellows work an average of 40 hours per week in a congressional office during the spring semester. Some Leland Fellows will work more than 40 hours per week depending on the demands of the office. Due to this workload, Leland Fellows cannot take any distance courses not related to the internship. Proof of enrollment is required.

Q: Is the Leland Fellowship paid?
A: Leland Fellows provides a $5000 stipend (over the course of the 14 week semester), paid housing and airfare.

Q: What qualities are desirable in an applicant?
A: UH juniors and seniors will be considered for admission to the program. A 3.0 GPA is the general threshold. Strong verbal skills (both written and oral) are mandatory. Prior experience working in a government or political setting as an intern or volunteer is highly valued. Demonstrated leadership ability and commitment to community service are also factors in the selection process. If all qualifications are very similar, priority is given to seniors in the selection process.

Q: How are the Leland Fellows selected?
A: Intern selections are determined by committee. The committee consists of HCPP staff, UH faculty and HCPP advisory board members.

Q: Do I need to be a political science major to be considered?
A: No. While the majority of the Leland Fellows will be political science majors, there have been numerous students from outside of the social sciences who have been selected for similar programs and proved to be quite successful. We are more interested with your skills, interests, experience and intellectual curiosity than we are with your major. However a basic knowledge of American government is required.
Q: Do I have to pay tuition for the academic hours earned as an intern?

A: Yes. The academic hours earned count in the same manner as other courses so regular tuition is required. Talk to your advisor about your degree plan, academic hours, and registration.

Renée Cross is the instructor of record for the academic hours associated with the internship.

Q: How are the office assignments determined?

A: The Leland Fellows director has extensive experience in human resource management and governmental relations, and matches the interns to congressional offices primarily within the Texas delegation. Factors considered in assignments include the following: 1) The student’s partisanship; 2) The student’s policy interests; 3) Demonstrated skills such as writing and speaking ability; and 4) Special skills such as fluency in additional languages or special software proficiency. Special requests by the offices are also a significant factor in the assignment process.

Q: What kind of responsibilities can I expect to have?

A: There is not a good answer to this because there are so many variables. For example, if you have worked in government before, you will likely be placed in an office that tends to give their interns more substantial responsibilities such as legislative research or project coordination. Conversely, with no government or even general office experience, an intern will likely begin with clerical work. In fact, regardless of your experience level, you may begin your first weeks doing clerical work. It is important that the office sees that you are dependable and competent at basic work before you are given more significant responsibilities.

Generally speaking, you can expect to provide administrative support to staff, conduct Capitol tours for constituents, attend hearings and briefings on behalf of the office, correspond with constituents and lobbyists, prepared media releases, and worked on websites among other activities.

Your own interests can make a huge difference in what you are assigned. Let’s say you have exceptionally strong writing skills and you are interested in learning about media relations, then you may have the opportunity to work with the person that directs media relations. Or if you have solid statistical skills, you may have the opportunity to work on a policy analysis project.

Government interns cannot expect to be intricately involved in making policy in their first few weeks or months of work, but with a good work ethic, diligence, and enthusiasm, they can usually expect increasing responsibility as their internship progresses.

Q: Do Leland Fellowships ever turn into full-time jobs?

A: Although possible, there is no guarantee that you will be hired once your internship ends. However, many interns in similar programs have been hired by their host office (whether in DC or in the district office) or by someone they met while interning. An internship allows for many networking opportunities that could lead to employment. Check out www.uh.edu/hcpp/_docs/successtoday.pdf to see what former interns are doing.

Q: Will an internship really make a difference in my academic or professional future?

A: An internship in a government office can be a very rewarding experience. In professional terms, interns can explore this potential career path, build a professional network of contacts, and gain valuable work skills. Personally, interns may discover a passion for public service, meet new people, and enjoy the privilege of serving as an "insider" in a government office. See what the New York Times reports about the value of internships at www.uh.edu/hcpp/_docs/NYT.pdf.

Questions?

For general questions, contact Isaiah Warner at the Hobby Center for Public Policy at inwarner@uh.edu or at 713 743 3942. For questions regarding credit or degree plan eligibility, contact your academic advisor.

www.uh.edu/hcpp/interns/leland-fellows  ■  www.uh.edu/hcpp/interns