

HOLLERAN CENTER

PICA JUNIORS IN ACTION

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MEET GRACE FINLEY '16, THE "URBAN EDUCATION LEADERS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FELLOW" WITH THE DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I am currently working with the DC Public Schools (DCPS) as a selected "Urban Education Leaders Internship Program fellow". I have been placed in the Office of the Chief of Schools under the Academic Planning and Support team, where I assist with summer school programming, track summer school enrollment, and prepare for "Rainbow Graduation" (an additional graduation date at the end of summer school). I am also developing and teaching an "empowerment workshop" for summer school students. This curriculum aims to encourage students to take ownership of their own learning and cultivate a long term vision of life beyond high school.

DCPS strives to "ensure that every school provides world- class education that prepares all students, regardless of

background or circumstance, for success in college, career, and life." This mission statement is driven by several concrete goals: to improve achievement rates, invest in struggling schools, increase graduation rates, improve satisfaction, and increase school enrollment.

Although I cannot say with certainty where my path will take me after graduating Connecticut College, I am thinking more seriously about teaching in an urban setting. This internship is unique in its ability to provide experience in the policy/ administrative side of an urban district, as well as in the schools themselves.

I appreciate the district's willingness to receive new ideas with a readiness to implement them. I did not anticipate that I would be allowed to develop a project with

other interns in my office, independent of my supervisor. The opportunity to teach at DCPS provides an incomparable window into urban education.

When searching for an internship, I vowed that I would only apply to those that excited me—not to settle for anything less. With this mindset, I was able to pursue an internship that aligned with my future aspirations and goals.

With that being said, the best piece of advice I've received throughout this process has been to take the experience for what it is, good or bad. In other words, you are not required to love it. Instead, learn from everything, stay curious, ask questions. No matter the internship, it will provide insight for future career choices.