

Sacramento Semester Program

2025 Impact Report

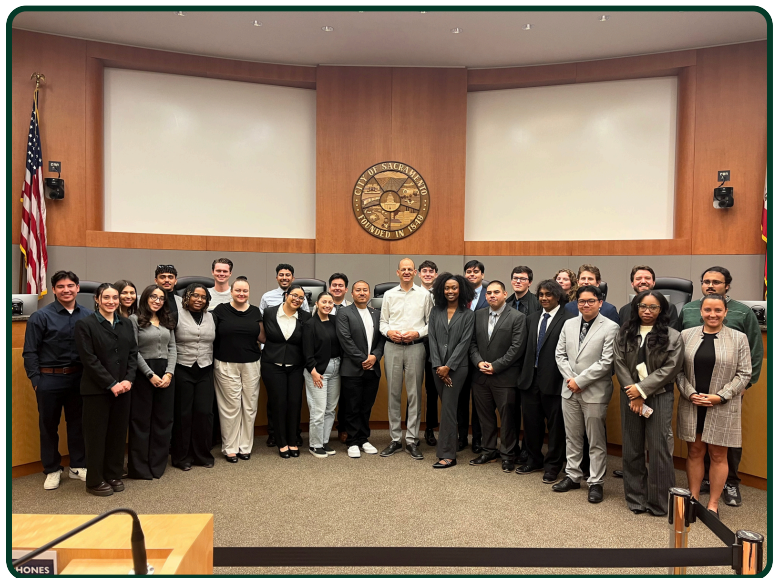


Program Director Welcome

The Sacramento Semester Program is a premier experiential learning program that engages students from across the CSU system with our lawmakers here in the capital of California. Students relocate during the Spring semester to Sacramento to engage in academic and professional development through course work and internships. The primary focus of their time here is to learn the ins and outs of the policymaking process and apply their academic skills to real world policy problems facing our state. The legacy of this program is a long one, celebrating the 50th anniversary this coming Spring, 2026! For 50 years, this program has been training, mentoring, and educating California leaders, with alums going on to become elected officials, founding their own consulting or lobby firms, working in various public sector jobs, going on to pursue graduate degrees, or engaging in innovative entrepreneurial endeavors, just to name a few. Regardless, each of them has carried on a tradition of civic engagement and leadership that they began to build in the Sacramento Semester Program.

Each year as the Director of the Sacramento Semester Program, I have the distinct privilege of getting to know a new cohort of our state's future leaders. The students that join us here at Sacramento State represent the wide variety of lived experiences shared by Californians, which enriches the program in different ways as the students bring their passion into their academic and professional spaces. The 2025 cohort included 28 students representing 9 of our CSU campuses including Southern and Northern California CSUs. They each brought with them a sincere desire to learn and grow. Importantly, what continues to stand out to me are the sacrifices that many of our students make to relocate and/or dedicate an entire semester of their courses and time to learn about the policymaking process. While most of our student interns in our local Political Science Internship Program devote 10-20 hours a week to their internships, the Sacramento Semester Program students averaged 24-32 hours a week, often while also working part-time paid jobs to make ends meet.

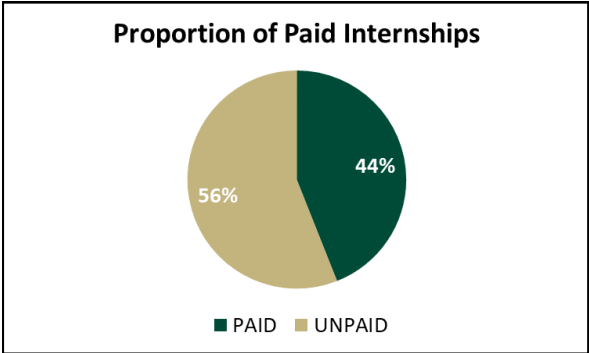
This year was marked by two broader changes that have enhanced the experience of our students. First, the skills labs that students participate in during their Friday morning seminars continue to expand to meet the needs of the ever evolving job market. One element of the seminar includes the student field trips. This year our site visits included the Assembly Floor hosted by the Chief Clerk's office, the annual tour of the California State Library with training offered by the California Research Bureau, and a visit to Sacramento City Hall with training and a visit from Mayor McCarty's Office! As a distinguished alum of the Sacramento Semester Program, Mayor McCarty continues to pay it forward with his support of each new incoming cohort. In the classroom, the students had panel presentations from committee consultants, consulting and lobbying firms, graduate students to help the cohort consider possible paths after their BA, and a program evaluation methods training from the Institute for Social Research.



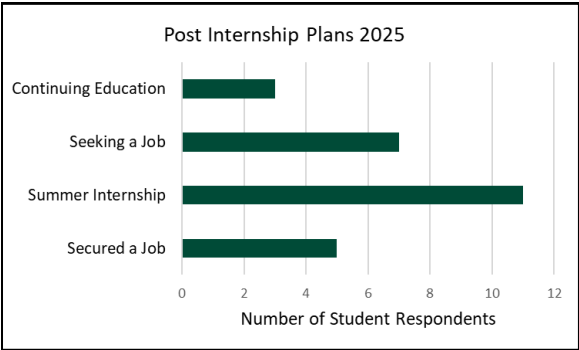
The second major enhancement has been engagement from our Alumni Chapter. This chapter has continued to grow and expand their support since starting back up during the pandemic. This year, the alumni board hosted multiple networking events and mixers, provided advice and training during our program orientation on interview best practices, and did our first annual Professional Clothing Drive where we were able to offer hundreds of pieces of professional clothing to our students in collaboration with

the Center for California Studies. Additionally, this year’s board was able to offer two stipends to students facing financial hardship, with one visiting student and one local Sac State student each receiving a \$500 stipend. Finally, 27 out of our 28 students took advantage of the alumni mentorship program and were paired with an alum throughout the semester to provide them with additional professional support.

While we continue to explore ways we can enhance the academic and professional development this program has to offer, we have also had to confront some of the real challenges facing our students. Despite the growth in paid opportunities for interns, the majority of opportunities remain unpaid, requiring students to either forgo internships when they can’t handle the financial constraints, or to juggle full-time school and internships with additional paid jobs. In this year’s cohort, 56% of students were placed in unpaid internships. While students know going in that a paid position is by no means guaranteed and therefore are able to plan ahead for their financial needs, many students who intend to apply opt out due to fears about their financial stability. On the bright side, students in the Sacramento Semester Program receive generous scholarship support, with visiting students receiving significant housing support due to the advocacy of alumni in our state legislature. Additionally, we are working year round to identify additional funding and resources, like student housing in the Hornet Commons, to address student needs.



Students in our program, like all our students across the state and across the nation, are also facing increasing job market uncertainty. Budget challenges in our city and our state, increasingly tumultuous state-federal relations, and new reforms to state legislative labor regulations have all created a lot of uncertainty for our young people. As someone engaged in career support, I regularly see excellent students struggling to secure a job placement post-graduation, despite following all of the best practices. However, one bright spot in the Sacramento Semester Program is the commitment to developing their professional skills and expanding their networks. While these challenges remain salient, even for the best students, I also believe that our program is addressing many of these challenges head-



on by continuing to adjust to the feedback and experiences of our students as well as our employers. The Sacramento Semester Program 2025 cohort was demonstrative of the success of these initiatives with over two thirds of the students who were graduating securing at least a summer position and at most a full-time job as a result of their internship experience.

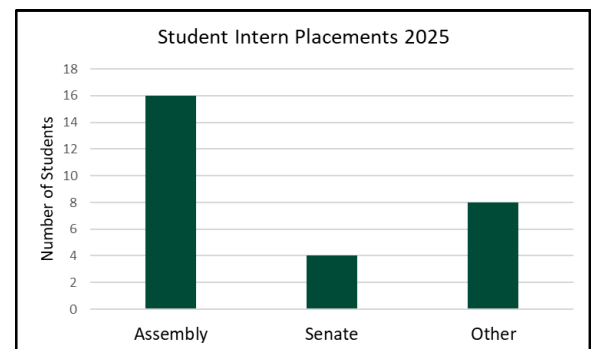
Of the job seekers listed following the program, many have since secured employment in a position related to their training and career goals.

As we approach the 50 year anniversary, it is important to consider the foundations of this incredible program and how it has continued to thrive for so long. Earlier this year, we lost the great, Dr. Jean Torcom, who was part of the establishment of the Sacramento Semester Program. Her foresight in identifying, along with other colleagues, the unique positionality of Sacramento State in the capital and the opportunities to serve the both the legislature and the broader CSU student population have created a symbiotic relationship benefitting generations of CSU students. What Dr. Torcom understood, and what has helped subsequent program directors such as myself continue this legacy, is that the success of the program comes down to a group effort. The fantastic mentorship of our internship hosts, the dedication of our alumni, the support of the Political Science Department at Sacramento State, the advising resources from faculty across the CSU system, and most importantly, the hard work of the students has made 2025 yet another successful year. I look forward to working together to continue this success for the next incoming cohort.

- Jaime Jackson, Assistant Professor, Director of the Sacramento Semester Program

Student Experience

The 2025 Cohort represented 9 different CSU campuses, with 12 of our students relocating from visiting CSU campuses. Their majors included Political Science, International Relations, Communications, Criminal Justice, and Education. Most students participate in this program with a goal of either directly interning for the state legislature, or at least interning in a space where they can observe and interact with the policymaking process at the state or local level. As a result, the majority of our intern placements are in the state legislature. However, in addition to placements in the Assembly and Senate, students interned at the following sites:



- Office of Governor Newsom, Communications
- Office of Sacramento Mayor McCarty, Constituent Affairs and Community Engagement
- California Student Aid Commission, Governmental Affairs
- California Special Districts Association
- Farmer's Insurance, Legislative Affairs
- Swing Strategies
- California DOJ, Office of the Press Secretary

Student Spotlight: Gavin Iribarren

- Home Campus: Sacramento State
- Major: International Relations
- Internship Site: Office of Assemblymember Elhawary
- Post Program: Continued as a Summer Intern

“My team not only allowed me to succeed in the tasks they gave me, but pushed me to spearhead things I would've never thought of asking for to broaden my experience. - Gavin Iribarren, Sac State”



Student Spotlight: Rebecca Parsons

- Home Campus: Cal Poly Humboldt
- Major: Political Science
- Internship Site: Office of Assemblymember Harabedian
- Post Program: Hired as a Legislative Aide



“My internship experience was amazing and I felt like I did the work a true legislative aide would do. - Rebecca Parsons, Cal Poly Humboldt”

Participating Campuses



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SACRAMENTO

Sacramento Semester Program

Scholarship Highlights

A number of trends in internships and the workforce, such as paid opportunities or transportation subsidies, have led to greater access for our more low-income students. However, the major game changer continues to be a commitment to scholarships that can offset the cost of tuition and fees while students participate in these important experiential learning programs. This year, our students benefitted from substantial scholarship support. Here are some highlights:

- Visiting students received \$6,500 each in housing support
- 24 students with unmet financial need received an additional \$102,500 in scholarship support from the State Legislature
- 2 students received additional \$500 stipends from the Sacramento Semester Program Alumni Chapter
- For the second year, one student received the \$3,500 Jonas Minton River Preservation and Environmental Scholarship

Scholarship Spotlight: Who was Jonas Minton

The second annual Jonas Minton River Preservation and Environmental Scholarship was created by the late Mr. Minton's wife, Julie Carrasco Minton, to honor the legacy of a true mentor and leader in water policy. Jonas Minton spent the greater part of his career at the California Department of Water Resources, eventually becoming the Deputy Director. This career was marked by intense advocacy for the protection of California's waterways, and numerous policy successes such as the addition of 1,200 miles of California's rivers in the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. His passion for environmental advocacy continued well into his retirement from DWR when he served as the Senior Water Policy Advisor to the Planning and Conservation League. He was remembered by those at DWR and in his broader community as someone who cared very deeply for mentoring and supporting the next generation; a quality demonstrated by this legacy scholarship.

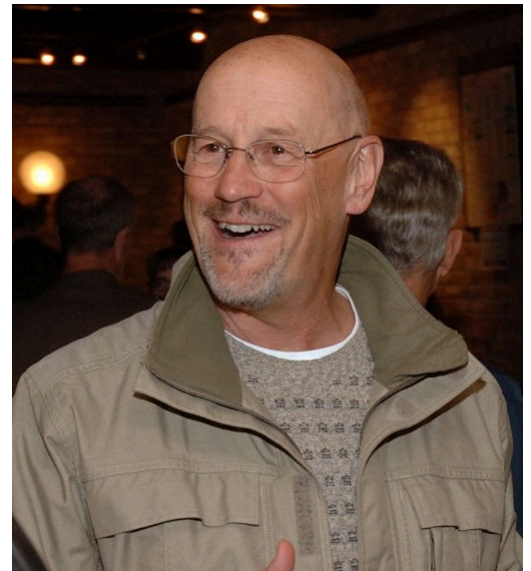


Image from DWR memorial.

This year's recipient, Daniel Gonzales noted in his application, "Growing up in Northern California, I've seen firsthand how environmental issues have disproportionately impacted marginalized communities, especially Latino and low-income populations. These experiences have motivated me to work toward finding sustainable and equitable

solutions.” Given Jonas Minton’s own commitment to serving the underserved, Daniel’s commitment to equitable policy solutions made him a fitting recipient for this award. He went on to work on numerous water and environmental policy issues as an intern at California Special Districts Association this past Spring.

Sacramento Semester Program Alumni Chapter (SSPAC)



This program is lucky to have a dedicated and highly active alumni chapter. This year’s board went above and beyond to outreach, support, and create opportunities for the 2025 cohort.

2025 Board Members:

- Paola Mendez (2024), Mentorship Coordinator
- Rachel Cooperman (2021), Alumni Relations Coordinator
- Juan Carlos Martir (2020), Fundraising

- Britney Ortiz (2021), Chair
- Aaron Gilbert O’Neil (2023), Secretary
- Doonya Mahmoud (2023), Treasurer

The board accomplished many things in the 2024-2025 year, but below are some of the amazing highlights that enhanced the 2025 cohort experience.

- Collected over 300 pieces of clothes donated for the first annual Professional Clothing Drive.
- Gave out \$1000 in stipends for two unpaid interns.
- Hosted 4 successful networking mixers.
- Paired 27 students with mentors.
- Provided interview prep training during orientation.



Get Involved!

The ongoing success of this program is a team effort. There are lots of ways for folks to get involved.

Join the 2026 Cohort

If you are a CSU student (or know an awesome CSU student) consider joining us in your Junior or Senior year for the Spring Semester by applying to our program. Applications Open **September 15th** and close on **October 24th**. Use the QR code below to check out our website and learn more.



Host an Intern in Your Office

If you have an office dedicated to mentorship and professional development, and want to work with a passionate and well-trained CSU student, consider reaching out to the Program Director, Jaime Jackson (jaime.jackson@csus.edu) to learn more about how your office can participate in our program. Students work with you for the full Spring semester, committing 24 hours a week to their work. The program includes a support structure to ensure your office is getting the most out of the experience, while also ensuring the student has a network to rely upon.

Make a Donation

Sacramento Semester Program is one of the College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies' "Living Laboratories". Supporting our programs allows us to provide our internship students with additional resources that can off-set the financial burdens of participating in unpaid internships, thereby increasing access to these opportunities for low-income students. You can use the QR code here to help support this incredible program.

