

APRIL 2021

DoD College Acquisition Internship Program Captures Students' Attention During Pandemic!

In 2019, when the Department of Defense (DoD) College Acquisition Internship Program (DCAIP) launched with 600 applicants, no one imagined the applicant pool would nearly triple in just two years, with the majority of the applicants being STEM majors. DCAIP provides an opportunity for college students to work alongside the best and brightest minds in the DoD to innovate, challenge, inspire, and deliver products that support America's Armed Forces and sustain America's influence abroad. Students achieve this through a 10-week paid summer internship within a DoD acquisition organization. Upon a student's successful completion of the internship, the organization may noncompetitively convert the individual to a permanent position in the acquisition workforce. DCAIP targets full-time second and third year students currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at an accredited college or university. Interns receive hands-on, practical experience in analysis, research, report writing, oral briefings, policy development, program analysis, and computer applications.

Established as a pilot in 2019 by the Office of Human Capital Initiatives (HCI) of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, DCAIP is part of HCI's talent management strategy to recruit and retain full-time students who are enrolled in institutions of higher education.



DCAIP is similar to industry best practices to “build the bench” of talent through internship experience and with degrees that are in high demand across the acquisition community.

In this article, DCAIP interns Sydney Williams and Sarah Mudd share their perspective on the program and how they're benefitting from their participation.



Sydney Williams

Internship: PEO Solider, Army, Fort Belvoir

College: Old Dominion University

Major: Finance

What attracted you to DCAIP?

I was attracted to DCAIP because I wanted a job that would give me real experience in the field of my degree and also give me experience working within the government.

What did you find to be the most valuable aspect of your DCAIP experience?

The most valuable aspect of my DCAIP experience was seeing the connections between what I have learned in school and what I experienced during my internship. I also found it valuable that even though most of my internship was online and remote; the team I was working with was really engaging and therefore I was able to learn a lot.

What did you enjoy most about your internship?

The thing I enjoyed most about my internship was gaining experience in my field and learning new tasks. As I learned new skills and attended training, I saw a lot of connections between the internship and what I have learned in school. I thought it was really cool to see what I have learned be applied in the real world.

What was the most challenging part of your experience? Most rewarding?

The most challenging part of this experience was it being mostly online and remote. I am grateful I was still able to participate in this opportunity given the circumstances. However, it is hard to make personal connections that way. It is different when you don't meet people except through a screen and every time you talk to someone or they are teaching you something it is only online. The most rewarding thing I think would be when I actually understand the new skills I am being taught. Sometimes some of the things I was supposed to be working on took me a couple times doing them or being explained to get it completely, but when I finally figured it out, I felt very accomplished.

How do you see DCAIP helping you reach your career goals?

I can see my internship helping me reach my career goals because I have experience in my field and also in the government now. Additionally, DCAIP gave me a solid foundation to start my career.

What would you say to a student considering applying to DCAIP?

To a student considering applying to DCAIP I would tell them that it has been a really beneficial opportunity for me. I have been able to improve my communication and business skills. As well as get a feel of how my job could be and more of what I am looking to do after I graduate.



Sarah Mudd

Internship: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSD) (A&S): International Cooperation

College: University of Georgia

Major: International Affairs

When did you apply to DCAIP?

I applied to DCAIP in the fall of 2019 and was accepted into my DoD component office for the summer of 2020. However, COVID-19 inhibited my ability to start the program. I was blessed to be able to start within my office in the winter of 2020. I am returning to my office for the summer of 2021 internship and hope to gain even more experience!

What attracted you to DCAIP?

I was attracted to DCAIP because of the ability to have hands-on exposure to the acquisition field while gaining valuable insight from experienced civilian and service employees within a specialized DoD component.

What did you find to be the most valuable aspect of your DCAIP experience?

By far the most valuable aspect of my DCAIP experience was the exposure to the process of preparing materials for international bilateral meetings and being able to sit in on various meetings between senior employees and their foreign counterparts.

How do you see DCAIP helping you reach your career goals?

DCAIP will help me reach my career goals in a multitude of ways. During my time in the office, I learned many aspects of the working world that are not taught in classrooms and are very unique to this career field. By having this understanding of many niche components of my particular office, I will be able to apply what I learned to my future endeavors.

What did you enjoy most about your internship?

The most enjoyable part of my internship was the personal connections that I made within my office. Although my time within the office was during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was able to make lasting connections with my colleagues. I greatly appreciate their assistance and guidance!

What was the most challenging part of your experience? Most rewarding?

The most challenging part of my experience was balancing the fast-paced work environment with my final exams for the fall 2020 semester. I was able to start my internship before the culmination of classes at my university and although it was challenging, I am proud to have been able to complete my finals successfully while interning full time. The most rewarding part of my experience was knowing that I contributed to the overall mission of my DoD component and the mission of the DoD as a whole.

What would you say to a student considering applying to DCAIP?

I would encourage them to apply because there is no amount of education that can prepare you for the real working world! Get out of your comfort zone and put in the effort to achieve your goals. I promise that you will not regret your experience!

Why would you want to work in the Department of Defense?

I would like to have a career in the DoD to do my part to support our Nation's warfighters to work towards the continued betterment of the United States domestically and internationally.

The Department of Defense College Acquisition Internship Program (DCAIP) is returning in 2022!



Applications for **DCAIP 2022** are right around the corner! Internship highlights include:



Positions available for multiple fields/majors, such as: engineering, computer science, business and more



Various locations across the US to apply



Hands on, applicable field experience



DCAIP interns are paid competitive wages



Define your future by applying for the DoD College Acquisition Internship Program. Check out hci.mil/dodcareers/internship.html for more details!