



# Jessica Kent

Eli J. Segal Citizen Leader Program

Brandeis Segal Fellows Summer Internship Report

## **When you arrived at your Internship site, did you know what you needed to know? Did you have the name and contact information of your site supervisor? What did you learn that you wish you had known before you started?**

Yes. I called my site supervisor to set up a phone meeting with her. We discussed the vision of the organization, my role within that and what tasks/duties I would be responsible for. We also emailed back and forth a few times. She also referred me to another woman in the organization who I emailed with to coordinate training before I began working at CPL. I arrived at the office to participate in a training session that CPL was hosting for one of its fellowship programs and got a flavor for the organization's work through that first-hand experience. After the weeklong training, I was given a tour of the office and warmly welcomed by the staff during a luncheon.

I wish I knew more about the relationship between the CPL national office and its other offices/initiatives around the country. I also was unclear what the differences between my mentor and coach were. I ended up meeting with both, but I don't think that was due to the program's structure rather my eagerness to do so. The lessons I learned about life and work and citizenship I am glad I did not know before because that is what made the experience great.

## **What did you learn about leadership, followership, human relations, teamwork, civic engagement? About yourself? About making change?**

Wow, that's a BIG question. I definitely feel as though I gained a better understanding of the "real world" of non-profits, politically-related organizations, and human resources at-large. I learned a lot about how big value ideas are shuffled into smaller issue plans and vice versa. This philosophy has intrigued me even weeks after I have returned to Brandeis. I learned about the realities of jobs and D.C., which has been invaluable to me since as I look ahead and determine what I'm most passionate about. In terms of what I learned about making change: I feel like I realized things on both extremes. On the one hand, I realized how truly easy it is to make a big difference with a small change – even within bureaucracy or the government or in historic communities. On the other hand, I realized how difficult it is to initiate and sustain those changes.

About teamwork: this is a huge part of the working world, much more so than I realized previously. The teamwork dynamic at CPL was great and also very interesting to me. I observed the complications others had with working in teams which reaffirmed to me that having that skill is imperative to the type of work I seek to do.

About civic engagement: I learned that the issue with our lack of civic engagement cannot be solved by a single program or legislation. The lack of civic engagement is within the psyche of our citizens. The programs that we are putting in place are positive outlets for those who are seeking opportunities, but the apathy and ignorance that most people operate from need to be offset by changes much bigger than an after-school program. This realization is not depressing or disappointing, but rather very invigorating and exciting.

## **What program improvements would you recommend? Pay? Program? Site selection? Anything at all?**

This may be CPL and time-specific, but I wish that my tasks were better outlined and that I had more to do. I cannot complain because I was given absolutely no "typical intern work" like stapling or filing but I did feel as though I learned an awful lot about patience and stretching out my work to fill the workweek instead of working to fit everything in as I had expected.

I also think that being in an environment with only 1 intern was helpful. I felt as though I was treated much more professionally when I was the only one as opposed to being 1 of 2 when another intern joined CPL's national office.

The pay of the internship was fair, but finding housing in the DC area was difficult. Living with my host family was one of the best parts of the experience, so I am glad that I was not living in a dorm, but I appreciated meeting up with other Brandeisians in DC this summer too. There was also so much in DC that looked fun, but I did not feel like I could do because I was filling a 40 hour work week. My supervisor made the lines fuzzy by saying "Sure, you can leave the office and go to an event in the city", but she was very adamant that I still put in 40 hours a week. Other internship programs have only a 4-day workweek. Perhaps even allotting a half day off each week or every other week would enable the participants to get a flavor for the area they are in and network beyond the office walls. Perhaps Segal fellows who are in a particular area (as the fellowship grows) could meet for a meal once or twice during the summer or they could give a tour of their office to the other fellows.

**What did you accomplish at the internship site this summer? (This is important both if you accomplished great things and if you didn't—the question in both cases is "Why?")**

I felt as if I accomplished an enormous amount even though one of our 3 events was cancelled. I researched and picked out all of the logistics details- from location space to hotel reservations, travel arrangements to food selection, supplies and technology set-up. The internship did feel much more like an event planning position than anything else, but I enjoyed the challenge and the opportunity to shape a weekend training on my own while being responsible for all aspects of the budget. That was definitely a big and positive learning experience! I helped to pull together the binder for the training with all of the materials and paperwork too. I wish I had been able to shadow and assist other areas of the organization to get a better feel for CPL as a whole.

**What else would you like to mention that is not captured in the questions provided above?**

The best parts of the fellowship have been 1) learning about Eli Segal and feeling an intense connection to his cause and character 2) being treated like a valuable, accomplished, and most importantly, promising leader within the realm of citizenship. I appreciate how well organized the fellowship has been, especially the attention to detail. I did not feel, however, that my personal and individual experience was given as much attention during the summer as it has been before and after. I appreciate and admire the work that Eli Segal, his family, and the Segal Fellowship staff have done to make "this idea into a reality". I am very proud to have this opportunity and be part of a phenomenal network. I am very much looking forward to what's in store in the future.