



University of Alabama System

## Capitol Scholars

# WHAT IS THE CAPITOL SCHOLARS PROGRAM?



— “ —

a chance to be  
*in the rooms*  
where decisions are made.

– 2025  
Capitol  
Scholar

— ” —



a select group of students from  
The University of Alabama, The  
University of Alabama at  
Birmingham, and The University  
of Alabama in Huntsville.

a cohort that spends seven weeks of their summer in Washington, D.C. Each Scholar is placed in a full-time internship for the duration of the program. Capitol Scholars *also* have the unique chance to be exposed to a wide variety of views by engaging in various external meetings with members of the Alabama delegation, governmental affairs agencies, and more.



University of  
Alabama System®

# INTERNSHIPS

Once selected, Scholars' placement decisions are determined by UAS Governmental Affairs and governmental offices' requests and vary each year.

See below for some of the 2025 Capitol Scholars' reflections on their internship experiences.

—“

My internship at Van Scoyoc Associates tied all of this together. Whether I was preparing morning briefings on agency actions, tracking federal nominations, or sitting in on client calls, I constantly saw examples of our unique system of government at work. It became clear to me that separation of powers isn't just an academic concept—it's the framework that guides every decision, every negotiation, and every line of policy.

***Seeing it in action*** taught me how real leadership requires balancing ambition with restraint, and authority with humility.

”—



Jack Hastings & Addie Grace Pyron,  
**Van Scoyoc Associates**

—“

I have experience in research, but before this summer, I had never dealt with such rapid turnaround times. At VSA, I conducted lots of hearing coverage: taking extensive notes, compiling them, and writing detailed memos to be sent out to clients and members of the firm. Often, I had less than a day to finish a project. This new experience was extremely beneficial; I had the chance to quickly hone my writing skills. I am certain this will behoove me immensely as I enter the equally ***fast-paced environments*** of law school and the legal field. I have learned more about the appropriations process and federal appellate litigation than ever before, and this directly correlates to my potential future career in appellate law. Familiarity with these processes will help me navigate fields with which I would otherwise be wholly unfamiliar.

”—

—“

Working in Congressman Aderholt's office taught me extensively about working in government and, further, reaffirmed my desire to work in or alongside government. Seeing the focus on constituents and learning how different groups, including nonpartisan researchers, come together to achieve different goals has

***confirmed my passion for policy***

and strengthened my interest in returning to D.C. in the future. This experience has also empowered me and helped me build connections that I believe will be valuable if I decide to come back to D.C. to work. Spending each day on the Hill allowed me to see day-to-day operations up close, learning how the office navigates challenges while serving constituents.

”—

—“

Working in the press and communications allowed me to participate in meetings that were mostly not yet available to the public. I have learned that the federal government is somehow simultaneously the fastest and slowest-paced environment I have ever been in.

***I loved every minute of it.***

One such experience I had was researching, analyzing, and annotating a project. The contents went straight to the committee. I felt a sense of importance and pride in being able to contribute to something so relevant.

”—



Isabel Blevins,  
**House Committee on Administration**

—“

My work with Mountain View Partners showed me how lobbying, when done transparently and in the public interest, is another critical check in the system. It represents how civil society ***participates in the policy process***, applying pressure and providing information that can shape outcomes across all branches of government.

”—



Samuel Stowe,  
**Mountain View Partners**

—“

I was able to get ***hands on experience*** in the authorization and appropriation processes during a critical time: when the bill moves through Congress. Working at a time like this has been monumental. In 7 weeks, I was able to fully immerse myself, now I have a much better understanding of appropriations and Congress.

”—



Hudson Hanner,  
**Austal USA**



Scholars work at their respective full-time internships for the duration of the program. What makes the Capitol Scholars Program *unique* is its additional external experiences, through which Scholars are exposed to an incredibly diverse set of perspectives and professions.

— “What I enjoyed most about the program was the incredible opportunity to be immersed in Washington, D.C.'s policy landscape....it gave me a **front-row seat** to the inner workings of government affairs.” —

- Jack Hastings

— “Having the chance during the external experiences to ask **difficult, thoughtful questions** and to participate in conversations with those at the highest levels of government and policy was invaluable.” —

- Woods Hobbs

— “The impact of physically being here, immersed in the fast-paced environment of DC, is **ineffable** and really cannot be replicated elsewhere.” —

- Addie Grace Pyron



## MENTORSHIP PAIRINGS

Each Capitol Scholar is matched with a mentor – a career professional in their corner to answer questions and provide individualized guidance throughout the program.

## EXTERNAL EXPERIENCES

Washington, D.C. is a dynamic environment with schedules changing by the minute. Capitol Scholars’ specific external experiences will thus vary by year. Through these meetings, the Program exposes its Scholars to the widest possible variety of governmental perspectives. Scholars meet and engage with members of the Alabama delegation, governmental affairs agencies, and UA System alumni.



— “Visiting places like RAND, the American Enterprise Institute, the Bipartisan Policy Center, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Supreme Court exposed me to a **wide range of perspectives** on public policy, research, and governance. Hearing directly from experts and leaders at these institutions helped me understand how policy is shaped not just within government, but by the ecosystem around it—think tanks, advocacy groups, and the private sector.” —

- Jack Hastings

— “I enjoyed not only the opportunity to intern on Capitol Hill but also the experiences outside of our primary internship. Meeting with contacts in the Chamber of Commerce, think tanks, Supreme Court, White House, and more **broadened my horizons** and opened my eyes to opportunities beyond Congressional offices.” —

- Cassidy Matwiyoff

— “I developed a greater appreciation for the critical roles played by advocacy groups, think tanks, lobbying firms, legal consultants, and public affairs offices. Seeing how these organizations influence public policy **expanded my view** of how one can meaningfully contribute to the political process without necessarily holding public office. It revealed an entire set of career paths I had not previously considered but now find genuinely compelling.” —

- Woods Hobbs



## NETWORKING EVENTS

Scholars attend multiple networking events throughout the program, where they interact and form connections with experienced D.C. and Alabama-based career professionals.

— “The receptions and networking dinners gave us **practical experience** in sharing our goals and building connections that could help us in the future.” —

-Katherine Gray

# SAMPLE TIMELINE

You’ve heard about the various activities the Capitol Scholars engage in – internships, mentorships, networking, and external experiences! One might wonder how it all fits together... the timeline below illustrates highlights from the actual 2025 Capitol Scholars Program schedule.

Recall: these external events happen simultaneously with the full-time internships. Supervisors are aware of the unique CSP schedule and allow Scholars to leave work to attend external meetings and events.

“ One of the most memorable experiences so far was visiting **AEI and RAND**. Before coming here, I had a general understanding of what think tanks did, but actually seeing the inner workings of both organizations was eye-opening. Sitting in on those conversations and seeing the policy world operate in real-time helped me appreciate the **intellectual weight** these institutions carry in shaping national conversations. ”

- Woods Hobbs



May 12, 13

Meetings with the American Enterprise Institute and RAND Corporation

May 14

Networking Reception Honoring the Capitol Scholars at Venture Government Strategies

“ I loved getting to meet and have lunch with White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin...it was so **powerful** to listen to someone care so deeply about the work they are doing. ”

- Raven Hartsfield

“ I appreciated Mr. McLaurin’s candid and **sage advice** regarding taking advantage of UA’s vast alumni network and maximizing opportunities. ”

- Cassidy Matwiyoff



“ The networking events were nothing short of a **master class** in career development. Being able to have genuine conversations with professionals in a myriad of fields was an incredibly valuable experience and helped shape and sharpen skills which will benefit me both personally and professionally. ”

- Hunter Hutcherson

“ The connections I made will last **throughout my career** and life. I’ve already had internship offers for next summer and people who want to talk more. These are the experiences that propel someone into a successful career, and I never would’ve had these opportunities without the Capitol Scholars Program. ”

- Hudson Hanner



May 15

Lunch with White House Historical Association

May 27

U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Bipartisan Policy Center, National Economic Council



“ The meeting with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce offered a **unique perspective** on economic policy – I learned about the collaboration between government and private institutions. At the Bipartisan Policy Center, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance and challenges of finding **common ground**. Hearing from professionals who are actively working across the aisle reminded me that change is only feasible when we **work together**. ”

- Raven Hartsfield



“It was nothing short of **transformative** to be in the same building – let alone in the same room – as the Justices while these generational questions of power are at play. I will never forget the overwhelming gravitas of the Court.”  
– Addie Grace Pyron

“Getting to see SCOTUS release opinions was one of those **once in a lifetime** things... it was impactful in so many ways.”  
– Hunter Hutcherson

June 5



## U.S. Supreme Court Opinion Release Session & Meeting with Protective Life Corporation

“What I enjoyed most about the University of Alabama Capitol Scholars Program was the opportunity to meet with members of the Alabama congressional delegation. Hearing **directly** from our state’s leaders offered valuable insight into the legislative process and the unique challenges they face.”  
– Raven Hartsfield

June 10, 11



## Meetings with Alabama Delegation



“I enjoyed meeting the Alabama delegation... putting myself in a position to be educated by those who have been **fighting for their constituents** longer than I have been alive, as well as those in new districts with new constituents, was an amazing experience.”  
– Isabel Blevins

June 13



## Meetings with Alabama Delegation



June 23



## Meeting and Networking Event at Southern Company

“My **faith** in the future of our country was **restored** during our night tour with Rep. Gary Palmer. Not only did he share so many unique historical accounts, but he also lit a fire and **call to action** within us to be the generation that restores our country’s faith in the government.”  
– Cassidy Matwiyoff

“It wasn’t just a history lesson — it was a **charge**. The night tour of the Capitol with Congressman Gary Palmer was, without question, the experience that taught me the most. I was reminded of what this country was built to be and the incredible responsibility that comes with serving it.”  
– Woods Hobbs

“The networking events **taught me the most** about working in government. You see how many different types of people have worked in government, what their paths were to get there, and what their career is now.”  
– Sierra Rose Aragon

“It was a privilege to hear Clay Ryan’s insights and experiences, both in his role with Southern Company and as one of the architects of this program. His **candid perspective** on leadership, public policy, and the importance of building meaningful connections left a lasting impression on our group.”  
– Woods Hobbs

June 24



## Meetings with Alabama Delegation & Night Tour of the U.S. Capitol



# REFLECTIONS FROM 2025 CSP ALUMNI



— “ Being able to engage directly with leaders from government agencies, congressional offices, think tanks, and advocacy groups taught me not just about the issues facing our country, but also about the importance of **being present** in the spaces where those issues are discussed. This experience has also expanded my professional network in ways that will benefit me long after this summer. I leave with a more complete and nuanced understanding of the different professional spheres operating around government, and I feel far better equipped to navigate them moving forward.

— ”  
- Woods Hobbs

— “ More **doors** than I even knew existed have been **opened** for me now. This program is something special, and I consider myself humbled and grateful to have been able to participate. One frankly cannot learn how Washington “works” without being here – we hear constantly that connections are everything, but we’ve now seen and heard firsthand how true that actually is. I am thankful to the UA System for ensuring that students who otherwise would not have the means are able to have these experiences, and I will carry the lessons I’ve learned with me through law school and into my career beyond.

— ”  
- Addie Grace Pyron



— “ Whether it was seeing staffers deliberate over legislative priorities or hearing different perspectives from members of Congress across the aisle, I came away with a clearer understanding of how the design of our government fosters both accountability and collaboration. Ultimately, this experience helped me **bridge the gap** between my research-focused academic background and the practical world of policymaking. I now see more clearly how science, advocacy, and governance interact, and how I as a researcher can be part of the process.”

— ”  
- Samuel Stowe



— “ These seven weeks gave me a taste of what the future could look like. Interning in my Congressional office and participating in the program helped me see how I might **channel my passion** for policy into positive change.

— ”  
- Katherine Gray



— “ This program is incredibly well planned and offers early career opportunities that many could only **dream** of; I’m fortunate to be a part of it.

— ”  
- Michael Halvorson



— “ This experience has **changed the trajectory** of my future for the better. Before this program, I had a sincere interest in coming to Washington D.C. after graduation. Now, I am officially on the track to do so.

— ”  
- Cassidy Matwiyoff

## CSP DIRECTOR, CARROLL C. PHELPS

— “ One of the things that makes this program so unique is that students from such a **wide variety** of disciplines are able to unite through a **shared passion for government** as they participate in these immersive and life-changing experiences in D.C. Through their internships and numerous external experiences, students are exposed to the many diverse ways they can work in government.

— ”  
- Carroll C. Phelps



For more information about the program, contact Mrs. Phelps at [cphelps@uasystem.edu](mailto:cphelps@uasystem.edu) or 205-348-2049.