International Academic Programs
INTERNATIONAL DIVISION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

UW Wisconsin in Washington, DC (WiW) Internship Program Handbook

Spring 2026

This IAP Program Handbook supplements other study away and program-specific materials provided on the IAP website (including the Study Abroad and Study Away Handbook), in your MyStudyAway account, in the Internship Search & Application Guide, and sent to you by program staff. It is a resource that provides the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before or during your program.

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Contact Information

Staff based in Washington DC

Office address:
100 Maryland Avenue, NE, Suite 420
Washington, DC 20002

TBA
Wisconsin in Washington Program Manager
Cell phone: TBD
Office phone: 202-263-4522
Email: TBD
Responsibilities include:

- Supports advising students on internship search
- Contact and advisor for students when in DC
- Supports advising with housing-related issues
- Manages on-site organization and support
- Plans WiW Hosted events
- Leads alumni relations

Lucas Young (he/him)
Wisconsin in Washington Program Coordinator
Cell phone: 414-204-3689
Office phone: 202-263-4525
Email: lucas.young@wisc.edu
Responsibilities include:

- Leads advising students on internship search
- Contact and advisor for students when in DC
- Leads advising with housing-related issues
- Manages on-site organization and support
- Plans DC excursions and events for cohort
- Supports alumni relations

Staff based in Madison

Office address:
301 Red Gym, 716 Langdon Street
Madison, WI 53706

Kerry Strader (she/her)
Assistant Director for Program Management
Office phone: 608-265-6329
Email: kerry.strader@wisc.edu
Responsibilities include:

- Serves as the Study Away Advisor for the program

- Advises prospective students
- Helps coordinate housing placements
- Leads pre-departure orientation and preparation for students
- Main contact for students regarding CISI health insurance and larger health and safety issues
- Assists on-site staff

Joanna Poinsatte (she/her)
Assistant Director for Study Abroad Enrollment
Office phone: 608-890-0939
Email: joanna.poinsatte@wisc.edu
Responsibilities Include:

- Serves as the Enrollment Manager for the program
- Leads program application process
- Manages program enrollment, answering student questions as needed
- Primary contact for students regarding course equivalents
- Processes grades and credits
- Assists on-site staff

Emergency Contact Information

In case of an emergency, call the **main IAP number (608) 265-6329** between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. CST Monday-Friday; after-hours or on weekends call the **IAP Emergency Phone (608) 516-9440**. Note: The Emergency Phone line is for ***emergencies only***, where the health or safety of a student is an issue.

Program Dates

Thursday, January 15 – Program begins and housing move-in
Friday, January 16 – Mandatory On-Site Orientation
Monday, January 19 – MLK Day
Tuesday, January 20 – First Day of Internship (most likely)
Wednesday, March 25 – UW Advocacy Day
Saturday, March 28 – Sunday, April 5 – Spring Break; Expect to work at your internship and attend class. Some internships MAY honor Spring Break.
April [Exact Date TBD] – WiW Spring Reception
Sunday, May 3 – Program ends and move-out date

Closer to the start of the program, Lucas will invite students, via email, to a shared calendar, which will highlight the dates above as well as dates of other required and optional program events. We encourage you to sync this shared calendar with your regular calendar (Outlook, iCal on your phone, Gmail, etc.), as you will be responsible for knowing and adhering to these program dates and events.

Academics

Students take courses in addition to interning. The courses are designed to deepen students' understanding of foreign and domestic policy, hear from professionals in DC, and to grow their professional skills.

Class Attendance

Students on this program should be present for all class sessions and planned activities. Instructors may have their own policies regarding attendance, what qualifies as excused absences, and grading. Please make sure to review your syllabi and contact your instructors for further clarifications.

Course Information

All students will take the same courses for 12 credits total. More information about each course is below:

- **Beyond the Internship: Career Exploration and Development – 4 credits**
  In this course you will have a chance to enhance professional skills, build a network of contacts, and explore career choices. Most important, you will have a chance to speak with a wide range of people about their jobs, views, backgrounds, and experiences. In order to weave these experiences into your academic work, this course will ask for active reflection, self-assessment, and the honing of your thinking and writing. It will help you build structure with written assignments, activities, reflections, and readings to help you make the most of your internship.

- **Current Issues in US Foreign Policy – 4 credits**
  This course will examine current issues in US foreign policy and will focus on policy developments in select regions and countries around the world in light of stated US foreign policy goals and objectives. It will cover current topics of interest ranging from European security issues and NATO'S future, to US policy toward Mexico, and to US trade policy to regional issues such as the US presence in Asia, including the North Korea question, relations with China, and the role of Japan. Guest presenters who are experts in course content areas will conduct certain class sessions. Students will be expected to write a policy paper at the end of the semester recommending future directions for US foreign policy.

- **US Congress and Federal Legislation – 4 credits**
  This course will provide an introduction to the United States Congress and federal legislation. Students will attend floor votes in the U.S. House of Representatives, will be provided with an overview of congressional office structure and functions– including multiple discussions with senior congressional staff, will explore how federal appropriations (spending) and authorizing legislation is crafted and enacted, and will discuss the role of lobbying in the modern Congress.

Course Schedule

Current Issues in US Foreign Policy - 6:30-9:30pm (Day TBC)
US Congress and Federal Legislation - 6:30-9:30pm (Day TBC)
Beyond the Internship: Career Exploration and Development – Friday mornings - 9:00am – noon
Friday afternoon – hold for class reschedules and program excursions. Do not plan to work on Fridays.

*Schedule and class titles subject to change and more specific details will be provided at a later date.

There may be additional scheduled activities outside of class time.

Enrollment and Course Equivalent Requests

IAP will enroll you in an 18-credit placeholder course for the duration of your program. You should not enroll in any on-campus courses.

The course you take on the program will have a UW-Madison "equivalent" course, which is how we will record it on your UW-Madison transcript. To establish a UW-Madison course equivalent for your WiW course, you will submit a Course Equivalent Request through your MyStudyAway account. Detailed information on the UW course equivalent process is available in the Study Abroad and Study Away Handbook.

Although the WiW program courses do already have pre-approved equivalents available, it may be possible to receive a different UW-Madison equivalent than what has been pre-approved. In the case of the internship and professional development course, it is possible to request an equivalent in a department that corresponds to the field of your internship (journalism, communications, healthcare, gender and women's studies, education, etc.). Because relevant academic departments review new course equivalent requests, our office cannot guarantee approval for those requests. You may find it helpful to speak with your academic advisor before submitting a new request.

If you are in the process of getting a **global health certificate** and want to apply for your internship to count towards your field experience requirement, please contact your Global Health Advisor.

For questions about course equivalents, contact Joanna Poinsatte at joanna.poinsatte@wisc.edu.

Pass/Fail

Please refer to the Study Abroad and Study Away Handbook for academic policies.

Grades

Grading will be based on the UW-Madison grading system. Additional information can be found on the Registrar's Office website.

Online Courses

We do not prohibit you from taking online courses while participating in this program, but we do not recommend it. Working at least 20 hours per week can be a big adjustment and adding additional course obligations may be too much. If you wish to take an additional online course, you will need to ensure that course does not conflict with your internship work hours, program course schedule or required WiW program activities. You will also be responsible for any tuition and fees for the online course, as they are not included in the WiW program fee.

Internship Information

Internship Search and Application Guide

Please note that participation in the WiW program requires you to carefully read and actively engage with the Internship Search and Application Guide during the **semester prior to participation**. This guide and information will support you in identifying and securing an internship placement in Washington, DC.

Acceptance to the WiW program does not guarantee internship placement. WiW utilizes a "student-led" approach to internship applications. WiW program staff can provide guidance, but you take ultimate responsibility for your applications and securing an internship. This will help you in learning and improving essential skills as you search for opportunities in your interest areas, craft application materials, market yourself, prepare for interviews, and weigh potential offers in a professional manner. It will be typical for you to apply to multiple internship opportunities to ensure success in obtaining placement.

Students are required to notify the WiW Program Coordinator of all internship offers **prior to accepting**. The Program Coordinator will then confirm that the internship meets program standards and will help guide students in the next steps.

International Students

International students should know that there **may be an extra step or process required** based on your immigration status **before you start your internship**, regardless of whether it is a paid or unpaid internship.

International students should consult with their ISS advisor immediately upon accepting their internship offer. WiW Program Staff are not International Student Services (ISS) Advisors and are not immigration topic area experts.

Most often, international students in the USA on F-1 visas are required to file for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Students should review UW-Madison's ISS webpage on CPT During the Semester. Before applying for CPT, you need your **internship offer letter to include specific**

information, like your start and end dates. CPT processing **can take up to 3 weeks**, so it is best to **start the process immediately** after accepting an internship offer.

When completing the CPT application, students are asked to list an **advisor to verify their internship information** – please list the **WiW Program Coordinator** (Lucas Young, lucas.young@wisc.edu).

In order to complete the advisor portion of the application, the WiW Program Coordinator needs information from you. **Please see the Internship Search & Application Guide Section 9.C for more information**.

Pre-Departure Preparation

MyStudyAway Account

Refer to the Pre-Departure Tasks in your MyStudyAway account Tasks to Complete section for information and steps to prepare for the program. You should complete all required tasks by the deadlines provided.

Orientations

There will be a pre-departure orientation on October 28, 2025 and an onsite orientation the day after moving into housing in DC. All students should attend and actively participate in program orientations.

The pre-departure orientation will be in person at the Study Abroad Resource Center and led by the Madison-based program staff with on-site staff joining remotely. For the on-site orientation, WiW on-site staff will facilitate it and will cover topics related to your internship placements, courses, housing, and general health and safety topics specific to living and interning in Washington, DC.

Accessibility

Please let us know if you require any alternative accommodations or if you have any accessibility concerns that may affect your performance in this program. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. The McBurney Resource Center is located at 702 West Johnson Street, provides useful assistance and documentation for a range of needs and concerns.

Contact McBurney at:
Phone: 608-263-2741
Text: 608-225-7956
Email: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu

Routine and Preventative Health Care

The CISI study away insurance plan does not cover routine check-ups or preventative treatment like vaccinations. Travelers should plan to get all check-ups and vaccinations prior to traveling.

Routine check-ups and preventative treatments are likely covered under the student's domestic/US insurance which would be in place still if treatment happens prior to departure. More information about how to use CISI while in DC is in the "Health Care" section below.

For prescription medications, we recommend that you bring enough with you for your entire time on the program. Otherwise, you should check that your primary insurance will cover the cost of prescriptions at a pharmacy out of state and arrange to pick up prescriptions through a DC pharmacy. CISI will only reimburse the cost of prescription medications, so you would have to pay out of pocket. Additionally, CISI will ask that you first go through your primary insurance for reimbursement. Make sure to pack prescription medications in your carry on luggage in case of lost luggage. **Past students have experienced difficulty refilling prescription medications in DC**.

If you are seeking a flu shot or COVID-19 vaccination shot, it is a good idea to get it prior to traveling. All members of our campus community are encouraged to remain up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccinations.

If you have any **mental health** concerns, before going away, let our office know; we can check with CISI insurance about proactively setting up support before you go. If you have an established relationship with a provider, you should check with them about whether care can continue virtually while you are in DC. Some providers will have limitations due to state licenses. Please also reference the "Living in Washington, DC" section heath care information below.

For international students, the UW Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) requirements apply. International students participating in the WiW program must enroll in SHIP for the duration of their active program. The SHIP office only accepts waivers for study abroad programs located outside of the U.S.

What to Pack

- Medications (put in your carry-on luggage)
- Program emergency card (print out from MyStudyAway)
- Primary insurance card and CISI insurance card (print out from myCISI)
- Twin size bed linens and blankets and pillows
- Towels
- Bathmat (just one per unit – talk with your roommates)
- Clothes for internship
    - Please check with your internship placement regarding the dress code for your internship site. This resource on different dress codes may also be helpful.
- Business formal clothes for events (especially networking events)
    - SuccessWorks has a Career Closet on campus that provides access to four free items of new or gently used professional attire for L&S students.
- Casual clothes for time on own
- Comfortable shoes for walking

- Secure (think anti-theft) backpack, bag, or purse
- Lunch box, Tupperware, thermos, and water bottle (or plan to buy in DC)
    - Packing lunches is a great way to save money!
- Ear plugs and headphones (for sleeping and studying in a shared space)
- Student ID
    - Your student ID is important to have to get student discounts on tickets and other events!
    - You may also need to show your student ID when coming to the building for class if surrounding roads are blocked to vehicular traffic.
- License/State ID
    - May need government issues ID like your Real ID or passport for security at certain events and venues like the White House or FBI tour.
- Bike Helmet (optional)
    - If you plan to ride a bike or scooter, we recommend taking safety precautions such as wearing a helmet.

Travel and Arrival Information

You must arrange your own transportation to Washington, DC. There are three airports you can use to get to the DC area:

- **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA)** – This is the closest to DC at about 5 miles away and is accessible via Metro (blue or yellow lines) taxi or rideshare.
- **Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD)** – This is about 28 miles from DC and accessible via Metro (silver line) or taxi ($60-$75).
- **Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI)** – This is about 30+ miles from DC and accessible via MARC/Amtrak train to Union Station

We recommend sharing travel plans with your cohort members to see if you can arrange shared rides if you arrive at the same airport and around the same time.

You are expected to follow move-in directions from the program housing provider, the Washington Intern Housing Network (WIHN). Usually housing move-in hours are 9am to 6pm but arriving outside of those hours is possible. If you plan to arrive outside of the hours noted above, please contact WIHN through your Roomsie Portal, and plan with your roommates

If you arrive before the official move-in day, you will need to find your own lodging. You may be able to move into WIHN earlier by paying an extra fee; contact WIHN for more details. Alternatively, you can consider Airbnb or a hotel.

Living in Washington, DC

The WiW program is an intensive learning experience where your days will be busy between internship and course work responsibilities. Still, you will have the time and opportunity to explore Washington, DC and take advantage of its many cultural and historical resources and landmarks.

Safety

Washington, DC is a large urban area resulting in safety concerns that are typical to most large US cities. You should take precautions for your own safety by educating yourself about safety protocols and safe options, for instance when planning and taking public transportation. During your orientation in Washington, DC, program staff will provide you with information about the neighborhood in which you will be living that will help you make safe, informed choices.

In all 50 states and Washington D.C., it is legal to use pepper spray for self-defense purposes. However, some states only allow the use and carrying of pepper spray under certain circumstances. You are responsible for adhering to any applicable laws in your program location.

Additionally, some organizations or buildings, like the Smithsonian Museums, may not allow pepper spray. You are also responsible for following any transportation security policies. For flying, please reference TSA guidance. For other modes of transportation, reference the transportation company's policies.

Health Care

If you need medical treatment while you are in Washington, DC, you should first check with your primary health insurance to see whether it can cover services in DC. If your primary insurance doesn't have coverage outside of WI, you can use your CISI insurance card. Do a search for Aetna Providers at this link (they work with CISI). Use your CISI insurance card (show the Aetna mark on the back of your card). CISI will be billed – i.e. you shouldn't have out of pocket payments. Your CISI policy number is also located on your Emergency Card, located on the Health, Safety and Insurance tab of your MyStudyAway account. If there are any issues, contact the CISI team.

The CISI study away health insurance plan includes some limited outpatient and inpatient **mental health treatment**. In the US, CISI is part of the Aetna Passport Network. You can locate a provider through Aetna's preferred provider discount network. Students are encouraged but not required to see providers within the Aetna Passport Network (of over 500K providers) as the bills are sent directly to CISI and there is no overcharging or billing of the traveler for amounts that are not usual and reasonable.

If you need acute/urgent/non-routine mental health counseling, you may call the CISI 24/7 assistance partner, AXA Assistance at phone number 855-951-2326 and ask for Remote Behavioral Health (RBH) Services. If the traveler is a threat to oneself or others then call 988, 911 or other first responders OR bring the traveler to the nearest ER if possible/agreeable. AXA's RBH Service is not a first responder service.

See more information about CISI study away health insurance coverage here.

Transportation

Public transportation is readily available in Washington, DC through both public buses and the area's metro. UW-Madison is part of the U-PASS program through Washington Metropolitan

Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Your program fees cover the cost at a high discount so that you have unlimited daily access to Metrobus and Metrorail during the duration of the program. You will receive your transit card at on-site orientation.

Parking is extremely limited in DC, and as a result, we highly recommend that students do not have a car during their participation on the program.

E-bikes and scooters are common in DC. No WiW program activities will require or recommend using these. If you choose to use an e-bike or scooter, you are encouraged to consider your safety, exercise caution, and wear a helmet. Driving these vehicles can be challenging, particularly in large cities and places that are not familiar.

There are some risky activities that the CISI study away health insurance policy excludes which is provided here: "Injury sustained while taking part in mountaineering where ropes or guides are normally used, hang gliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, racing by horse, motor vehicle or motorcycle, parasailing." Cars, scooters and e-bikes are not specifically excluded so accidents when operating either may be covered unless racing is involved or if the person does not have a license to drive the vehicle.

Housing

WiW program housing is arranged for you, and the cost is included in the program fee. We work with the Washington Intern Housing Network (WIHN), who provides and manages apartment spaces for students. Students will live either in the Barbara located at 821 Maryland Ave NE in the Capitol Hill neighborhood or the Aria located at 300 L Street NE in the NoMA neighborhood. The building assigned to our cohort will depend on space available, but all students in the cohort will be in the same building.

You must pay a **$400 security deposit** to WIHN for your housing. The security deposit is paid directly to WIHN, and they will contact you about how and when to pay it. WIHN will refund the deposit to the card used for payment within 45 days of the end of WIHN's housing session (date provided later). If WIHN determines that there has been excessive damage to the property or other violations to WIHN rules and policy, it can result in deposit deductions.

Students are expected to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in WIHN's Tenant Services Agreement and Rules.

All housing accommodations are furnished, including utilities, cable TV, wireless internet access, kitchens, dishware, cookware and appliances, bathrooms, and laundry facilities (irons/ironing boards). You can find their standard item list here. You are required to provide your own bed linens, pillows, towels, and bathmat (1 per unit).

Room Assignments

You will share apartment units **with other WiW program participants**. Apartment units typically have one or two bedrooms, and each bedroom has **two or three students**. Students who have

housing accommodations with McBurney for a single room should contact program staff and let us know **well before the program start date**. We will work with our housing provider to see if we can make that accommodation on the program, but it may depend on space availability. Students who do not have any McBurney accommodations will not have a single bedroom.

Room assignments are based on program enrollment and unit availability, with consideration for student preferences. We typically place students in rooms with others of the same gender. We understand that not all students may identify as female or male, and we want to create a welcoming environment for you while you are away. We are happy to work with students who identify as transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and/or non-binary regarding life in DC. If you have questions or concerns regarding housing as it relates to your gender identity, please contact a WiW program staff member. More guidance on how we assign roommates is in the housing form that you complete through your MyStudyAway account. While we cannot make a guarantee, we will make every effort to honor student preferences.

After arrival onsite, students will complete a housing agreement form with their roommate(s) to set guidelines for the shared space. If issues arise during your time on the program, the first step towards resolution will be to try to work it out directly with each other. Should you need further assistance, students will need to meet with the WiW program staff to go over the housing agreement and identify next steps.

Students must live in their assigned housing throughout the duration of the program.

Cost of Living

The cost of living is higher in Washington, DC than in Wisconsin, starting with a 10% sales tax. To give you an idea of this difference, according to MIT's Living Wage Calculator, the required minimum annual income for a single adult before taxes in DC is $54,034, compared to $46,137 in Madison.

Personal travel outside the DMV during the program

If students leave the DC/Maryland/Virginia (DMV) metro area while on the program (e.g. weekend trip to NYC), **they must notify the WiW Program Staff** at least 24 hours before departure. The WiW Program Staff just need to know the dates and destination for health and safety purposes. As long as the trip does not conflict with class, program activities, or internship responsibilities, it should be fine. If it does conflict with class or program activities, students are subject to absence policies penalties.

Advice from Past WiW Participants

These are from students' post-program evaluations.

Housing

"It is important to set boundaries with your roommates and understand that they may not be used to sharing a room- especially with two other people. The room itself is not very big and there is only one bathroom so communication and understanding is very important."

"Set up a roommate agreement first thing while my roommates and I didn't have to use it. I know a bunch of others who did it or who could've benefited from using their roommate agreement. Also, make friends with others in the apartment complex. Many times I found myself hanging out with them and I was thankful that they were there, so I had a larger network in the city."

"Explore a bit as soon as you arrive. Not only does it keep you from getting lost, but it also helps you discover things nearby that you'll be able to benefit from for the rest of your stay."

"Be mindful of the noise level to make sure you are not disturbing others. Make sure to keep it as clean as possible."

"Advocate for needing supplies or maintenance. You might need to request things often, but the staff is very quick to respond."

"You will be out of your apartment more than you think so who you live with and the small space will not matter that much."

Expenses

"Make sure to create a budget for yourself within the first couple weeks. D.C. is quite expensive and groceries and transportation and other things can add up quickly."

"Keep track of what you spend, do a rough budget and be aware. Plan to eat some pretty basic meals - lots of pasta. Bring a lunch box, some Tupperware, and a thermos to save money on lunches at work. Most museums are free."

"Be aware that restaurants/groceries are much more expensive in D.C. and budget accordingly. Luckily, some of this is balanced out by the free activities and things to do."

"Budget! I looked up prices at grocery stores in DC prior to going on study away to get a good sense of how much to budget for groceries."

"Don't Uber, rely on a free metro pass."

"Eat at home as much as possible and pack a lunch for work so you can splurge on fun meals every once and a while! Also, there are a ton of free events and places to visit so save your money for adventures outside of that."

"It's okay to say no to going out and doing expensive things! There's so many things to do for free in Washington, so embrace that."

Adjusting to the location

"It was hard to get used to city life but I just had to immerse myself into it and I was fine, and just go for it and you'll be fine."

“Since we were in DC, it wasn’t too hard to adjust to the culture because I found it to be very similar to Wisconsin. Like any big city I would just recommend that you keep aware of your surroundings, and be cognizant of how you’re adjusting to various norms, such as standing to the right if you’re standing on an escalator so people can walk by you on your left.”

“Things will be different than in Madison, so be ready to adjust! Some people weren't expecting an adjustment because we were still in the US, but it's still a new city and lifestyle!”

“If you have never lived in a big city before then the culture change can be jarring. If students have not used public transportation in Madison much, I recommend getting familiar with it before moving to DC because it will be much easier to use the metro and buses there! Also, explore neighborhoods outside of your own in DC because it is a very diverse and interesting city.”