

External Affairs Interns Come Full Circle

As a student, it's easy to overlook the many departments that it takes to run a world renowned institution like UCLA. With the launch of the External Affairs internship program in 2012, UCLA is looking to change that understanding by not only working to strengthen relationships outside community but also the internal relationships between campus departments.

The five departments of External Affairs, which include Alumni Affairs, UCLA Communications and Public Outreach, Development, Advancement Services, and Government and Community Relations, act as a bridge to the off campus community. The EA internship

offers an opportunity to current UCLA students to work on projects within a particular department while gaining a better understanding of how UCLA interacts with constituents. Additionally, since many EA interns end up being hired by UCLA as full-time staff they enter the workplace with valuable professional skills and a more well-rounded understanding of the university. Three former and current interns, who now work at the UCLA Alumni Affairs office, are bringing their experience full circle.

Sarah Rahimi is a graduating senior and the current EA intern for Alumni Affairs. One of the first things she learned was about the culture of giving back. In her current work with UCLA Alumni Diversity Programs she works to facilitate alumni connections with student diversity groups on campus. From yield events to mentorship programs she has learned that giving back is not just about monetary donations but about a general engagement with the campus. As she nears the conclusion of her internship, she's found that the experience she has gained not only helped her learn about campus but advanced her own professional development as well.

The success of the internship program can also be seen in two full-time staff who began their careers as EA interns. Sylvia Dsouza '14, current coordinator for Alumni Events, originally started working as an intern with the College of Letters and Science in donor relations and stewardship. One of the main projects she worked on was helping to locate and verify donor plaques on campus, some of which went back to the very early days of the university's founding. After locating them, her team contacted donors and their families to invite them back to campus, both to express gratitude and to reignite their relationship with UCLA. In addition to this project, she was also able to pursue her interest in campus development and often spent time at donor events.

As a coordinator for Alumni Events, Sylvia has been involved with putting together the Bruin Bash events at this year's football games and the events surrounding UCLA Homecoming on Nov. 1. In this role, she is able to use her experience with fostering strong relationships by inviting and welcoming alumni and students to these upcoming events. She still continues to keep in touch with her old colleagues and believes that her EA internship experience really allowed her to jump into projects with a more comprehensive knowledge of campus processes.

Another full time Alumni Affairs staff member, Aliza Nawaz '14 got her start with the EA internship program in Government and Community Relations. As a public university, UCLA relies on the state, local government and the local community for advocacy and resources. Aliza's duties involved working with the local branch of government relations, doing everything from contacting district councilmembers to researching UCLA's impact on the Los Angeles community. There are many UCLA alumni in public office and their influence can impact the campus in tremendous ways. One example is councilmembers



From left: Sarah Rahimi (Senior), Sylvia Dsouza '14, Aliza Nawaz '14

regularly donate buses to the university to be used for the annual UCLA Volunteer Day – a day of community service for thousands of new students, staff and alumni.

Now Aliza is working with Alumni Affairs in strategic partnerships to help acquire and fulfill outside business sponsor contracts, which is a vital revenue stream for the organization. Her experience as an intern has helped to illustrate how much outside support can benefit the university and has offered her a unique perspective on how to approach corporate collaborations.

Throughout the EA internship experience there's a consistent focus on the importance of understanding how External Affairs departments work in cooperation to further the UCLA mission of teaching, research and community service. The program sets up meetings with department directors for informational interviews and those hired full-time bring a unique campus-wide perspective to their department. One thing is clear, throughout the life cycle from intern to staff, they all exude a common passion and dedication to UCLA.