

Mogel Internship (May- August 2021)

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My Mogel Internship placed me in the Energy Jobs Office of the U.S. Department of Energy. My experience was unique compared to some other Mogel Interns, as I did not travel to Washington D.C., or even leave my home. Due to current coronavirus restrictions, I was working remotely. After the technical issues were smoothed out, I was thrown into a small but effective team of three who were closing in on finishing a huge project.



That project was the USEER, or U.S. Energy and Employment Report. The data had been collected, and the report itself was seeing its final adjustments. The short time between my entrance into the team and the report getting released allowed me to see exactly what was going on behind the scenes when this sort of official data is about to be released. Data on its own is not valuable. What is valuable is how that data will be used. As the report neared its release, the policy team needed to make sure that they knew

what their plan was going forward and needed to make sure not only that their messaging was clear, but that everyone who had something to say about what should be done was heard. In my first week, I largely listened into video conference calls with dozens of different groups, not understanding how all of these topics and people were relevant to our team. I took notes and was assigned research that largely felt like it was more for my own benefit than the teams. After all, if I was going to contribute, I needed to know what we were doing.

It was in these first few weeks, before the release of the USEER, that I experienced something I haven't felt in my years of academic or professional pursuits. I experienced imposter syndrome. The people around me were all incredibly competent and capable, and the only thing I seemed to be aware of that they weren't was how completely outclassed I was compared to the rest of them. During these first weeks, I had given myself one personal objective- help them if I can, but at the very least, don't get in their way and slow them down.

Luckily, they didn't see the situation that way. They always made me feel valued, and each individual on the team was more than happy to help me learn a new aspect of what was going on around me. I don't know if I succeeded in my personal objective in these first few weeks, but I was never given a reason to believe I hadn't.

Eventually, the imposter syndrome lessened, as I started tying the meetings and personal research into a broader picture of what the team's purpose truly was, and how these seemingly disparate groups, people, and ideas were all related to advancing their goals. As these things came together, I was in a constant state of newly figuring things out or revising things I thought I

had already figured out. But figuring them out I was, and I finally understood the benefit of being surrounded by people who are more capable than you.

Of course, I was given legal research to do and memos to write. I drafted some briefs, was asked to proof-read some documents, and given other intern-like work. But those are things that would happen at any legal internship. What I think I will take away most from this experience is the value of surrounding yourself with people who are more competent than you, and, absorbing as much from them as you are able.