which are subject to the idiosyncrasies of fitting complex papers into simple categories and the small number of cases on which these percentages are based," and would reiterate that five-sixths of these acceptances were in fact "inherited" by us from Lee. Contrary to popular perception, the rates for different categories tend to vary quite significantly from year to year. In the last previously reported full year, for instance, the imbalance was in the opposite direction—conceptual/interpretive papers were accepted at a rate much higher than the rate of submissions. At the same time, because of the long lead time between initial submission and final acceptance of revised manuscripts, the acceptances in any given year reflect in large part editorial decisions made many months earlier, and can be sensitive to random clusters of high-quality submissions of particular types. We have, nevertheless, been reviewing our practice carefully to ensure that papers in all categories are given scrupulously fair consideration.[2]

We continue to refine our collegial editorial model but are convinced it yields better (or, at any rate, fuller) suggestions for revision, as well as published articles that are more accessible to a broad range of the profession. It is also more work, and at the same time more rewarding, than we had imagined. ■

NOTES

1. Submission statistics for the year 2006–07 were generated for Tables 1 and 3 at UCLA some months after editorial offices were closed at George Washington University and using the *APSR*'s transferred database. They cover only 10.5 months, due to a change in annual reporting periods (now July 1 through June 30). Annualized submission statistics for that same year would equal 707 and 621 for "total" and "new," respectively. Thanks go to UCLA political science graduate student Rebekah Sterling for the additional database research and compilations.
2. The annual report for 2008–09 is expected to reflect a sharp, corresponding increase in the percentage of non-quantitative manuscripts accepted in the six months after this first-year report was originally prepared, bringing the mix for the full year—so far, closer to that of recent past years.

Table 4

Outcome of the First Round of the Review Process (%)

OUTCOME	2007–2008
Reject, incorrect submission	3.2
Reject without review	6.1
Reject and withdrawn	84.2
Invite R&R	5.9
Conditional accept	0.6
Accept	0.0

Table 5

Distribution of Papers Accepted 2007–2008 (%)

APPROACH

Quantitative	Formal and Quantitative	Small N	Interpretive/ Conceptual	Other
70	4	0	9	4

FIELD

American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Normative Theory	Formal Theory	Methods	Race, Ethnicity & Politics	Other
30	22	26	9	13	0	0	0

CONGRESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP REPORT

A Dissertating Fellow

William Curtis Ellis, *2008–09 Congressional Fellow*

Unlike most APSA CFP participants, I am not a mid-career academic, journalist, federal employee, or health care professional. I am a Ph.D. candidate in political science, smack in the midst of my dissertation research, which generated job-search needs that are quite a bit different than my colleagues. Most are here on a sort of sabbatical from their current career or even seeking to explore a possible career change. They are looking for positions that will immerse them in the life of a congressional staffer, some even desiring the 70-hour-a-week "Hill lifestyle."

I, on the other hand, am seeking to immerse myself in congressional institutions and process, while maintaining enough freedom to pursue various forms of qualitative dissertation research to supplement existing theoretical and quantitative sections, as well as provide additional insights that I would have missed without this experience. As I was told by my dissertation chair on countless occasions, "make sure they know you are not there to be a 60-hour-a-week, full-time staffer. Your first priority is to move the dissertation!"…Yes, Sir! Some of my grad school colleagues even viewed this great opportunity as a potential, unnecessary burden. They often asked, "Why would you want to lose a year to D.C.? Are you sure you will be able to move the dissertation forward and it won't just be lost time?"

Of course, these fears seem minor when compared to the possible benefits of such an experience. Many political scientists never set foot inside the Beltway, and for that, our work often suffers. Not to mention the career-long benefits to myself, and the institutions I work for, by having thoroughly established "Hill" relationships. I am grateful for this opportunity. I certainly had to take a slightly different approach to the interview process and be more open with potential office placements about my constraints. But I do not now, nor see myself in the future, regretting the decision to participate in APSA CFP for

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one second.

In this essay, I will briefly discuss my dissertation topic and the corresponding considerations I had to make as an active and researching Ph.D. candidate in selecting a placement, and how the fellowship will contribute to my research. I hope to encourage others who are at similar points in their careers to see that this opportunity has much to offer to the early stages of an academic career, and if handled correctly, for its unmatchable benefits. I think more aspiring academics should consider such opportunities at similar stages of their careers.

DISSERTATION AND OTHER RESEARCH DRIVING PLACEMENT SEARCH

As a "dissertating fellow," the primary driver of my placement search was my dissertation topic from my "first field" of political science study, American politics, focusing on congressional institutions. My dissertation explores how the institutional design of the committee and subcommittee systems influences the display and use of information in congressional policymaking. Additionally, my second field of study is public policy. Within public policy, I have an active research agenda focused on a specific issue area. Ideally, I sought a placement that would maximize my access to the institutional venues and processes most directly related to my dissertation topic while hopefully allowing me applied policymaking experience regarding my public policy research agenda.

Considering that the center of information display in Congress are congressional hearings, I was most interested in working as a part of the legislative staff for either a member of Congress who chairs a committee or subcommittee and is an active policymaker, or as legislative staff of a policy-focused committee or subcommittee. Thus, I focused my search on offices that fit this description. In the hope of an added bonus, I also tried to emphasized looking for members who needed staff to work on the specific policy issues I study, or held a committee seat (or were a committee) where such issues are directly under their jurisdiction. In order to maximize my Hill experience however, I also applied for positions outside of this framework in order to have a more broad learning experience from the interview process.

With these things in mind, I hit the congressional inboxes and the halls of the House and Senate office buildings. When I was lucky enough to receive interview opportunities, I was sure to be frank about my need for flexibility to do research. It is important to be open and upfront with offices about your circumstance. Some fellows may be afraid to do this, thinking it may limit their opportunities. But the fact remains, there is a lot of free labor running around the Hill, and much of it is willing and, more importantly, able to go at the more-than-full-time, frantic, style of the Hill. It is better that an office know in the beginning that you can or cannot work to that extent than to have conflict later. It facilitates a better experience for both sides, and surprisingly, many offices seem to be okay with this when you clearly and honestly explain your goals and circumstance.

Through a fortunate series of events in the interview process, I received three placement offers that generally fit well with part, or all, of my initial placement goals. At this point, I returned to my original placement rubric to make a final choice on which position to take.

CHOOSING A PLACEMENT

Each of the three placement opportunities came from entirely unique settings. Two of the offers came from personal offices: one in the Senate (Placement A), and one in the House (Placement B). The third offer came from a House policy committee (Placement C). Each of the three potential placements bore clear advantages for achieving my fellowship goals and, some more than others, potential disadvantages. To give an example of the types of circumstances a fellow in my shoes must consider, I will present a general overview of each placement opportunity as I understood it, and the pros and cons as I saw them.

Placement A

The Senate personal office presented a tempting opportunity. The placement was with the office of a very well-known senior member, with high-profile committee placements and a chair. According to the office, I was to be incorporated as a full-fledged part of the member's legislative staff. I would be given my own portfolio of policy issues to deal with and would have worked directly with one of the most experienced policy advisors in the office.

I saw numerous advantages in this placement. My policy portfolio would have included issues areas in which I study and have expertise, as well as other areas I have interest in learning about. In fact the legislative director and chief of staff were both appreciative of the nature of my fellowship situation, and seemed more than willing to give me flexibility to conduct research. However, there were primary drawbacks that kept me from accepting this position.

First, although I would be focused on the policy issues I desired from the outset, the office planned to focus on policy that was geared toward home more then being a part of the national landscape. Strategically, this made sense as due to a potentially precarious future electoral positioning. Because of this, the office is emphasizing the "what I have done for you" aspect of representation with the next campaign firmly in mind. Because of this, I would have been heavily involved in meeting with local interests as opposed to the national interests that are at the center of my policy research. Additionally, the senator did not hold committee placements that hold jurisdiction over the issues in my portfolio. Thus, it seemed I would be rarely involved in committee hearings and policymaking activity, the type that is directly relevant to my dissertation. Finally, the policy advisor who would have been my direct supervisor seemed less enthusiastic about my research and my fellowship circumstance than the higher-ranking staff members. This signaled to me a potential conflict point over the flexibility my circumstance requires.

Ultimately, I chose to pass on this opportunity as it came with more potential drawbacks than the other opportunities. The chance that I would not be afforded the flexibility I need for dissertation research simply was not a risk I could afford to take.

Placement B

Like Placement A, the placement opportunity in the House personal office had many benefits. The representative is in the top tier of seniority. The representative also holds a prominent committee placement and subcommittee chair. Although the representative is not actively involved in the policy issues I focus on, I would still be exposed to the type of institutional processes my dissertation examines. Additionally, the representative[1] and staff also felt strongly that a fellowship should be a learning experience for fellows first, and an opportunity for the office to utilize free labor, last.

To this extent, the office did not have particular job descriptions in mind for fellows. Like most offices, fellows are given a desk and included in office activity, but they are not given any sort of legislative portfolio or guaranteed list of responsibility. That said, the representative was clear that if a fellow wished to be involved with office projects and

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was a self-starter, becoming a more involved staffer was achievable, just not required. The attitude was very much focused on enabling fellows to learn Congress, which became quite clear when the representative looked dead at me and said, "You're not on my payroll. If you come in in the morning and there is a hearing you want to go to on the schedule, well . . . go to it!"

This placement seemed very favorable in the sense that I knew there would be no problems acquiring the flexibility needed to make progress on my dissertation. Yet this most favorable benefit was also the biggest drawback. If I failed to shove my way into office activity in the policymaking activity, it seemed possible that making contacts around the Hill to benefit my research could be more difficult by not being as involved in the process. By default, I would also miss out on much of the practical policymaking experience I wish to gain while a part of CFP. I expected such practical experiences are going to provide a priceless supplement to my teaching and research in the future.

Even though this placement had the potential to provide only minimal policymaking experience, the guaranteed flexibility to do dissertation research—my number one priority for this year—gave this placement a slight edge over Placement A. In the end, the fit was not quite right and I passed on this placement as well.

Placement C

To paraphrase from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*: Placement A was a bit too hot, Placement B was a bit too cold, but Placement C was just right. In all honesty, the placement opportunity with the House policy committee was ideal for a number of reasons. I would be working on the chair's legislative staff. The chair is a prominent and influential member of the House, and is an active policymaker. The committee's jurisdiction directly includes the policy issues I research and, as a part of committee staff, I would be surrounded and participating directly within the institutional processes and activities I examine within my dissertation research.

The committee planned to use me more or less as a legislative assistant. They told me I would be placed on the "policy team" that works on the exact policies I study, and that they intended to utilize my specific issue expertise on pending, and potentially upcoming, legislation. Additionally, the policy director was very receptive to research concerns and the need for flexibility. The policy director also cleared this with people higher in the staff hierarchy, as well as the policy advisor who is now my direct supervisor. In fact, my supervisor was very pleased that I have dissertation research I am committed to because this person "does not believe in creating busy work." It was very clear that I would not only be incorporated into the office's policymaking activity, but encouraged to delve into my research during the typical ebbs and flows of activity on the Hill.

Since I accepted the placement, I have been directly involved in policy formulation, the organization of hearings, and policy research, all on policy issues that I am most interested in. I have received ample time to move forward with my dissertation research, spending most of my days as a part-time legislative staffer and part-time political scientist. This has allowed me to gain hands-on policymaking experience that could not be replicated anywhere else, to begin building relationships with brilliant people with prominent roles throughout the Hill's various policymaking institutions, and to move forward on dissertation data collection, analysis, and writing. Fortunately, I could not have asked for anything more.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I have been given. I am excitedly looking forward to further policy work within the committee, as well as utilizing the fellowship placement to add valuable insight to my dissertation.

UTILIZING FELLOWSHIP TO BENEFIT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

I feel as though any scholar would be remiss to fail to capitalize on an extended time in Congress for scholarly development and to pursue avenues to conduct observational and interview research that would be impossible outside the Beltway. CFP can prove to be a fantastic resource for scholars actively involved in big projects, such as a dissertation. Too often political science and public policy research is done from an outside perspective. Obviously we all cannot be as fortunate as Richard Fenno and David Mayhew when it comes to having inside access to members at home and in Congress for extended periods of time. But we can take advantage of programs such as CFP to steep ourselves inside the processes of the institution, and with the proper placement, conduct participant observation, and interview research that would be much more difficult, if not impossible, otherwise. Although I do have confidentiality agreements with CFP, my host office, and all members and staff that participate in my study, I plan to utilize the CFP experience to garner qualitative contributions to my dissertation research in a variety of ways.

I must begin by explaining that in no way is my dissertation simply an observational study based on my time as an APSA Congressional Fellow. To the contrary, the initial theoretical expectations and research design were established long before my fellowship began. Additionally, although my dissertation committee and I knew I would be a part of the 2009 CFP, the research could easily be done in the traditional style of strictly quantitative studies that cover the American politics landscape in political science. The prospectus did include places where we expected the fellowship to provide valuable supplemental qualitative data and observations that will help steer the direction of my research. In order to make these qualitative additions, I plan to interview a number of members and staff regarding specific topics for my dissertation.

Anyone who has done first-person research in Congress can share how hard it is to get access to members and high-level staffers if you are simply "political scientist X from university Y, and would like a few minutes" with them. People with this experience will also tell you how gaining such access is much less difficult (although certainly not easy) for those who are inside the institution. CFP provides political scientists a clear opportunity to spend time within the institution, providing the opportunity to exponentially build relationships around the Hill, and gain the access advantages of being an "insider." In my experience, fellow staffers are willing to help with interviews and providing further contacts when you are someone they work with and can trust because in essence, you are one of them. Often this even crosses party lines. Of course gaining access to members is a difficult task for anyone, but being on the inside allows you to develop the relationships necessary to get time with a member. The CFP experience can yield strong contributions to active research, but also provides a learning experience with exceptional long-term gains.

As a CFP fellow, you play and observe the congressional game from the inside out. You have access to invaluable knowledge resources such as the Congressional Research Service that you cannot gain up-to-date access to from the outside. You see how things really work and your textbook perspectives are forced to change, at least slightly. From a classroom perspective, what

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and how we teach students about the Congress will certainly change for the better, and my teaching will probably be viewed as more credible than before I had experience on the inside. From an academic perspective, my time in the CFP will clearly inform all of my future research on Congress. Theory building for future research will undoubtedly be influenced by this experience, and many of the relationships I build will last beyond these 10 months to shape and inform all aspects of my academic career. I think CFP provides an un-replicable chance for scholars to advance their knowledge and increase their institutional value.

In closing, I hope that this essay will encourage more scholars who are actively engaged in research to explore such opportunities. Whether a professor on the tenure track, or a Ph.D. candidate pushing forward on the dissertation, CFP can provide many, many benefits. Please contemplate the benefits of such an experience, beyond the possible inconveniences or setbacks that can easily come to mind, and evaluate the possibility that these things are clearly overshadowed by the vast, potential benefits of the APSA Congressional Fellowship Program. ■

NOTE

1. In this case, unlike most offices, I was able to meet the representative during the interview process. In fact, most of the interview was conducted by the representative.

Congressional Fellowship Program 2008–2009 Office Assignments

Founded in 1953, the APSA Congressional Fellowship Program is the nation's oldest and most prestigious congressional fellowship. More than 50 years later, the program remains devoted to its original objective of expanding knowledge and awareness of Congress. For nine months, select political scientists, journalists, doctors, federal executives, and international scholars gain "hands on" understanding of the legislative process by serving on congressional staffs. Through this unique opportunity, the association enhances public understanding of policymaking and improves the quality of scholarship, teaching, and reporting on American national politics. For more information, please visit www.apsanet.org/content_3031.cfm?navID=41. The 2009 office assignments are:

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