The Creighton Center for Service and Justice is very grateful to the Lilly Endowment for making possible this Faith-Justice Summer Internship program through Cardoner at Creighton.
Participant Reflections
How students were changed/challenged by their faith and justice summer internship

Rachael Hoffman ('07)
2006 Interfaith Worker Justice Intern

Why did you decide to participate in this summer internship? “I wanted to commit my summer to something larger than myself. I wanted to put my faith in action, integrate my vocation, be inspired by the Ignatian example Creighton was sharing with me. I wanted to spend my summer participating in an internship that would allow me to do something I believed in while acquiring skills that would help me in the future.”

What (and whom) were you witness to? “I sat with Maria as she cried while describing the horrible treatment she endures at work; her male co-workers verbally and sexually harass her weekly. I marched with hotel workers, big-box living wage supporters, immigrants, day laborers, and fellow advocates…I was inspired by the perseverance and steadfast nature of the workers, and the opportunity to witness and be part of our staff… I grew the most in the strengthening of my belief in the dignity of each worker and in my commitment to help those who are being treated unjustly.”

Rachel, pictured on the right, graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor of Social Work. She now lives at Holy Family House, a Catholic Worker Community, in Kansas City, KS.

Emily Ruskamp ('10)
2009 Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach Intern

What is the link between justice and public policy? “I truly believe in the preferential option for the poor, both through direct service and structural justice. Because of our country’s unique position in the world, our policies affect individuals across the globe, and it is important that we always consider what effect our policies will have on the poorest individuals. Through my research and lobbying efforts this summer, I have become much more confident with voicing my opinion to my legislators and have become much more comfortable with the process of looking at legislation, learning about it, and forming an opinion.”

What was your favorite part? “One of my favorite experiences was meeting with the Peruvian ambassador to the US to talk about the conflict in Peru between the government and the indigenous people concerning the free trade agreement with the US and the effect it would have on land in the Amazonian basin where primarily indigenous peoples live.” Emily is currently volunteering in Peru with Incarnate Word Ministries. Follow her blog: http://emilyruskamp.blogspot.com/

Caitlin O’Brien ('11)
2009 Interfaith Worker Justice Intern

What does your job involve? “I interact daily with low-wage workers who share their testimonies of the injustices they face due to no fault of their own, but rather because of the place in which they were born into society. I then work together with the workers to decide upon a plan of action to take to either correct the situation if possible, or apply pressure to the larger company to ensure that the rights of workers in the future will not be violated. The strength and courage that I have witnessed this summer in the lives of the workers has truly moved me and motivates me to continue in the fight to change our nation’s broken labor and immigration systems that often disvalue and take advantage of workers in low-power positions.”

How were you impacted? It was incredible to hear such strong workers, especially women, who had decided to share parts of their lives and experiences that had left them feeling the most vulnerable. And beyond merely the stories of discrimination and harassment faced while on the job, hearing the amazing life stories of these individuals was truly inspiring. Even further, I gained an understanding of how crucial all social justice issues are within society as they are all interconnected. I learned that it is my responsibility as a member of this global community to look critically at policies and systems in place and to evaluate them, thinking about who could be potentially injured or disvalued.” Pictured here: Workers and community members rally together for improved worker treatment at Taco Bell. Caitlin will be teaching in Denver, CO starting Fall 2011.
“My summer with NETWORK allowed me the opportunity to learn from passionate and intelligent individuals, provided me access to the internal workings of the federal government, and motivated me to pursue a career in crafting just public policies.”  -Patrick Carter, NETWORK, 2009

Left: Patrick prepares to meet with a legislator.

Patrick graduated in 2010 and is pursuing a masters degree in public policy at the University of Minnesota.

“I discovered the power of relationships and how through those relationships grassroots change can take place. From my Christian background this is truly building the Kingdom of God where all move into right relationship with others and then so with God.”  - Ben Anderson, IWJ, 2007

Ben graduated from Creighton in 2007 and spent a summer learning about community organizing with IWJ before entering the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus.

“Working with the Center of Concern staff was, by far, the highlight of my experience in DC. They treated my fellow interns and me with the utmost professional respect. We were welcome to sit in on their staff meetings. We were also given projects, aside from our summer projects, to work on and present at staff meetings. They utilized every bit of our creativity and youthful energy. We always felt respected, welcome to share our views, and loved...My love of research has certainly grown, and I am now comfortable asserting that my future lies in data analysis”  - Chadi El-Khoury, Center of Concern, 2009

“But every day was different, challenging me to always learn more, continue to grow and reach, and have new experiences. One of the larger projects I participated in was the Hotel Worker Rising Campaign—a national fight against the Hyatt Hotel, infamous for treating its employees poorly. It was a great experience for me to be a part of various actions, calling people to attend, walking the picket line, and hearing workers’ stories. I began to see the plight of low-wage workers in a new way. Never again will I walk into a hotel without wondering how the workers are treated.”  - Becca Harvey, IWJ, 2010

“This experience is one that I will not forget. I got a first-hand look at the plight of workers and our undocumented brothers and sisters in Arizona. I was introduced to the crazy world of organizing that I hope to be a part of in the future. My eyes were further opened to the importance of every person who does have a voice, standing up and fighting for people who do not have a voice... Most of all I learned from the workers the importance of the dignity of every human being.”  - Will Rutt, IWJ, 2010

Picture on right: Will (far left) with organizers, workers, and IWJ founder and Executive Director Kim Bobo (far right).
Host Institution Reflections

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
A statement of collaboration from Jean Sammon, Network Field Coordinator

“Although NETWORK did not have a formal summer intern program, we said “yes” when the Creighton Center for Service and Justice asked if we would host two interns in the summer of 2009. We were delighted with the way they partnered with us in achieving our goals, and we were happy to have the opportunity to host additional CCSJ interns in 2010 and 2011.

Creighton seems to prepare the interns well for the faith-based advocacy work that we do. While in Washington, they quickly learn the workings of Capitol Hill and run with projects such as helping to put together a Congressional briefing, doing background on legislators before lobby visits, researching issues and writing for our website. They attend committee hearings and meetings and summarize what is happening for the lobbyists. This is enormously helpful in keeping us aware of what is happening on our issues, and saving time for the lobbyists at very busy times.

The CCSJ interns also help to educate us in a Jesuit perspective from “outside the beltway” (the heartland of our country!) that sometimes gets lost in Washington. We appreciate the mutual education that is made possible by the partnership, and we hope to continue our relationship with Creighton University and all the interns who have been here and are yet to come.”

Jean Sammon, Marge Clark, BVM and Simone Campbell, SSS

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
A statement of collaboration from Amy Woolam Echeverria, CCAO Director

“The Missionary Society of St. Columban and Creighton University have had a long standing relationship as two major Catholic institutions located in Omaha, NE for decades. One expression of that partnership is through the collaborative efforts of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (CCAO) based in Silver Spring, MD and the Creighton Center for Service and Justice (CCSJ). Since 2008 the CCAO has hosted approximately 35 CCSJ students through either our Advocacy Internship program in Washington, D.C., or our Columban Border Ministries in El Paso, TX.

The participation of CCSJ students in Columban mission at these two ministry sites has made a notable impact on our organization’s increased capacity to outreach to the local communities as well as advocate for structural change in the areas of federal and state migration, human rights, environmental and economic justice policies. The collaboration has been vital in our Columban priority to create structures that increasingly invite young adults to join us in mission through domestic, international, short and long term programs. Of particular note is the way in which the relationships have deepened over the years. For example we have had a number of CCSJ students participate in more than one Columban program, e.g. first an advocacy intern who then joins the alternative break trip to our border location or a border trip participant applies for international volunteer service upon graduation.

Columban mission is fundamentally about relationship. The collaborative efforts between Columbans and CCSJ have at their core been expressions of that understanding both with one another and with those whom we mutually serve and accompany.

Columbans remain committed to nurturing the relationship through receiving interns, alternative break students, and post-grad volunteers in our programs from the CCSJ. We are also open to exploring new possibilities that may be mutually beneficial yet to be identified.”

Amy Woolam Echeverria
CCAO, Director

Launching the On-Going CCSJ Advocacy Team

These summer internships have helped the CCSJ to build the student capacity for faith-justice leadership and create the student CCSJ Advocacy Team, new in 2009. This team conducted the research and assisted with training of over 700 students at the 2010 Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ) in preparation for the first national advocacy day, November 15, 2010.

Pictured above: Creighton University and Creighton Prep students meet with Senator Johanns’ legislative aid during IFTJ’s advocacy day visit.