



We are at the halfway point in the year and have had one fantastic opportunity after another. While there is still much more to come, it will be hard to top our recent trip to a Navy aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower. The purpose was to give us first-hand exposure to the military.

The adventure started with us spending the night on a Navy base near the aircraft carrier. On day two, we set sail on the massive ship which was longer than three football fields, had 22 flights of stairs (22!), tight passageways that required you to press yourself against the wall to make room for an oncoming person, and a crew of more than 3000 sailors. We spent the night on the ship, and on day three we returned to shore by helicopter just before sunset.

There are so many things about this trip that I will never forget.

First, Navy sailors deserve tremendous respect. It is common for sailors to work upwards of 16 hours a day, seven days a week, for months at a time. And when it is time for bed, most of the sailors are sleeping in berthing areas with bunk beds stacked three high, each separated by about 20 inches (just enough room to roll over), and in a room with dozens or even hundreds of others. The boat is rarely quiet due to the loud boom of aircrafts taking off and landing or from announcements on the overhead speaker. During the 30 hours we were onboard, there was only silence for about three hours from 1am to 4am.

Second, the leadership team was remarkable. We had a chance to meet with the Admiral, Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, and many others. Their ability to oversee the operations of the ship and react to unexpected changes was amazing. Working on an aircraft carrier is extremely complex and challenging; at any given moment a thousand things can go wrong. We watched the crew practice hypothetical scenarios in preparation for a deployment this summer. It was amaz-



Members of the 2015-2016 class aboard the U.S.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

ing to see how well roles were defined and executed as well as the pride each sailor took in their work. On that huge ship, with thousands of people running around, I had an unmistakable feeling that everyone was working in unison and able to quickly course correct as needed.

Third, the operation itself was incredible. Watching planes make arrested landings and get launched off an aircraft carrier by a pressurized catapult in the middle of the ocean is perhaps one of the most incredible things I have ever witnessed. We were able to see this right from the flight deck, just a few feet from the planes. You can't hear anything on deck since it is so loud (the catapult boom actually shakes your body!). So, every team on deck has a designated shirt color to signal their role. It was like watching a well-practiced ballet of red, blue, yellow, purple, and brown shirts.

When I got home, I could still smell the jet fuel in my hair. That is gone now, but the memories of this trip along with the sacrifices and hard work of our Navy will be with me forever.

BY SARA BLEICH
U.S. Department of Agriculture

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Commissioners, Alumni, Fellows, and Friends,

After a long and busy winter, spring is a welcomed sight!

The Fellows kicked off 2016 by participating in the second of a three-part leadership development series with Leadership Development Coach Dr. Nate Allen. We thank Dr. Allen for his incredible support for the program, for shaping the Fellows' leadership skills, and for providing mentorship. Two weeks after the session, despite the record-breaking snowstorm in Washington, the President's Commission convened via teleconference for our annual Mid-Year Commissioners' Meeting. In addition to receiving a report on the program, the current Fellows updated the Commissioners on their placements and Fellows from all of the earlier classes they selected reported out on their progress post-Fellowship. The members of the President's Commission invest a great deal in each class and we thank them for their continued support.

We look forward to working with the Commission to select the next class of Fellows. This February, White House Fellows alumni gathered around the country to participate in our annual Reading Group process and we thank those who participated. We are also grateful to the community leaders who are hosting and participating in our Regional Panels, which span from Boston to Dallas to Los Angeles. The show of support from alumni, panelists, and friends of the program is a testament to the value of the White House Fellows family and we are humbled by the continued dedication of our stakeholders.

In March, the Fellows were fortunate to participate in an international policy trip to Berlin, Germany. During the trip, they had the opportunity to meet with senior Embassy officials, government and nonprofit leaders, and members of the media. Some of the highlights of the trip include a visit to the Aspen Institute Berlin, a meeting with former Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Joschka Fischer, a visit to the German Federal Chancellery, and a dinner at the home of U.S. Ambassador to Germany John Emerson. We are immensely thankful to Ambassador Emerson and his family, Deputy Chief of Mission Kent Logsdon, Michelle Logsdon, Allison Bybee, Jeremy Fowler, and the rest of the U.S. Embassy Berlin staff for hosting us.

Upon their return from Berlin, the Fellows quickly packed up their bags and boarded the U.S.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, for a two-day visit. Aboard the carrier, the Fellows were able to meet with the ship's senior leadership, tour the facilities, and learn about the ship's flexible mission capabilities, including crisis response, deterrence, information operations, and security cooperation. We are grateful for the generosity of Commanding Officer Paul C. Spedero, Executive Officer Robert Aguilar, Command Master Chief Sheila Langejans, Public Affairs Officer Rebecca Rebarich, and so many others for allowing the Fellows to have this incredible experience and for continuing our important military-civilian tradition.

In the coming months, we look forward to more impactful experiences for the 2015-2016 White House Fellows and selecting the 2016-2017 class. We sincerely thank those who invest in the Fellows and our program each and every day.

Warm regards,



The 2015-2016 Fellows on the balcony of the German Federal Chancellery during their international policy trip.

2015-2016 Class Visits Berlin

“So let me ask you...to lift your eyes beyond the dangers of today, to the hopes of tomorrow, beyond the freedom merely of this city of Berlin, or your country of Germany, to the advance of freedom everywhere, beyond the wall to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind.”

John F. Kennedy, “Ich bin ein Berliner” Speech (June 26, 1963)

More than fifty years later, President Kennedy’s words to what was then a divided Berlin seemed to echo throughout our White House Fellows international policy trip to an utterly transformed city. The Wall has fallen, Berlin is no longer divided, Germany is thriving economically, and as we heard throughout our visit, the relationship between the U.S. and Germany is stronger than ever. Meanwhile, the world is facing the greatest refugee crisis since World War II and Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel has taken an unprecedentedly stance towards refugees. It was an extraordinary time for our White House Fellows class to see how Germany was working through major challenges and in some ways still striving to live out the words of President Kennedy.

The U.S. Embassy, under the leadership of Ambassador John B. Emerson and Deputy Chief of Mission Kent Logsdon, hosted our visit and exploration of 20th century Germany history, culture, innovation, national security and the refugee crisis. We met with multiple political leaders, academics, intellectuals and civic leaders, including Germany’s most beloved political figure and former Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor, Joschka Fischer. With more than one million refugees admitted to Germany in 2015, the refugee crisis was the foremost topic everyone wanted to discuss. We heard various viewpoints on this topic and visited the Berliner Stadtmission’s Refugee Shelter, one of 153 in Berlin, and the only air-inflated structure that has been used as a shelter. We spoke to the Director, Mathias Hamann, who gave us a tour of the neat and clean modular sections, including a play area for children. Although the shelter has a staff of 16, community support has been overwhelming and Mr. Hamann has a roster of over 1,300 volunteers who volunteer with a variety of tasks from meals to German lessons. The common thread throughout our conversations was a pro-



The 2015-2016 class visits the Berlin Wall.

found sense of responsibility, shaped by Germany’s history of the Holocaust, to respond in a compassionate way to this humanitarian crisis. There were some that expressed anxiety about how this influx of foreigners would reshape Germany and what it means to be German. While others hailed it as an opportunity and solution to Germany’s demographic problem of an aging population, others cited the example of the United States, a country of immigrants and the most powerful nation in the world known for its innovation.

“The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”

Milan Kundera

What was striking throughout our visit was the way in which Germans and Germany have not shied away from the legacy of the 20th century and the Holocaust and how much this continues to shape both domestic and foreign policy. Walking through Berlin’s cobblestoned streets, it is difficult to miss the *Stolperstein*, or “stumbling stones,” commemorative plaques that can be found outside of government buildings, art galleries or cafes, engraved with the names of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, marking where they used to live. Our visits to the Topography of Terror Museum, Berlin Wall Memorial, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe were haunting and thought-provoking. We were guided through the Topography of Terror Museum, built on the site of the former SS headquarters, by an exceptional guide who helped us look at photographs from the Holocaust in profoundly different ways. The photographs charted the subtle and insidious ways in which Jews were portrayed as different and menacing; although most Germans did not take active part in the Holocaust they also were not ignorant to what was happening. As we learned, young Germans who came of age in the 1960s confronted this history and forced a conversation in their own families and communities therefore creating a national dialogue.

A sense of responsibility to remember history, to “keep the memory alive,” seems to underlie what it means to be German today and evident in Chancellor Merkel’s controversial “welcome culture.” How Germany and Europe move forward and what role the U.S. will play are all uncertain. Chancellor Merkel seems to have taken John Gardner’s admonition to heart when he wrote, “We are all faced with a series of great opportunities—brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.” Our visit to Berlin at this pivotal moment in history was fascinating and left us with a great deal to reflect on for the remainder of our placements and our careers, “What is our responsibility, beyond ourselves and to all mankind?”

BY TEEB AL-SAMARRAI
U.S. Department of Energy

Placement Report

I feel fortunate to have joined the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) at such an exciting time. Health care reform remains a high priority for the Administration as the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) becomes increasingly apparent throughout the health care system. Six years after signing the ACA into law, the President announced that 20 million previously uninsured Americans have gained health coverage. This represents a landmark achievement in the expansion of health insurance coverage, but increasing access to care alone does not address the troubling trends of accelerating health care spending and poor patient outcomes that motivated the Congress to pass the ACA in the first place. In that vein, Secretary Burwell is leading the Administration's efforts for Delivery System Reform, which involves transforming the way we pay for care, the way we deliver care, and the way we share data and information to facilitate both. I have had the privilege to work on each of these priorities during my placement at HHS.

I first joined Acting Assistant Secretary for Health Karen DeSalvo's team focused on advancing the way data is shared by encouraging the developers and users of electronic health record systems (EHRs) to commit to enabling data transfer among different EHR systems. Achieving the goal of a nationwide network of intercommunicating health data systems will allow patients to share their medical records with health care providers wherever they seek care, as well as provide real-world data to drive public health initiatives and inform medical research and clinical practice.

In January, I moved to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to serve as a Sen-

ior Advisor to Acting Principle Deputy Administrator Patrick Conway (WHF class of 2007-08) and work on transforming the way we pay for and deliver care through alternative payment models. Through the Health Care Payment Learning and Action Network's (LAN) public-private partnership, I work to advance and align payment reform efforts throughout the U. S. health care system and, in particular, lead state engagement in this work.

Being placed at HHS has provided me with an ideal fellowship experience. I am learning firsthand the deliberation, stakeholder engagement, and follow-through necessary to develop and implement effective national policy, while at the same time applying my own background to represent the health care provider's voice in Delivery System Reform. Moreover, my growth as a leader has been hugely impacted by working with such outstanding examples of leadership as Secretary Burwell, Patrick Conway, Karen DeSalvo, and many others throughout HHS. I remain grateful to both HHS and the White House Fellowship for this singular opportunity.

BY ALEXANDER BILLIOUX

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Alexander Billieux in front of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Washington headquarters.

2015-2016 Education Report

SPEAKER SEMINARS

- ◆ Justice Sonia Sotomayor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- ◆ Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director of the Peace Corps
- ◆ Chuck Todd, Moderator of “Meet the Press”
- ◆ Broderick Johnson, Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary
- ◆ Loretta Lynch, Attorney General of the United States
- ◆ Anthony Foxx, Secretary of Transportation
- ◆ Joanna Prichett, Desk Officer for Germany, U.S. Department of State
- ◆ Strobe Talbott, President of Brookings Institution
- ◆ Robert Kimmett, Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany
- ◆ Peter Wittig, German Ambassador to the United States
- ◆ Karen Donfried, President, German Marshall Fund of the United States
- ◆ Constanze Stelzenmuller, Robert Bosch Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution
- ◆ Elaine Chao, Senior Fellow at Heritage Foundation
- ◆ James Comey, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- ◆ Michèle Flournoy and Scott Gould
- ◆ Rick Stengel, Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy
- ◆ Phil Cullom, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BERLIN POLICY TRIP

- ◆ Meeting with Kent Logsdon, Deputy Chief of Mission
- ◆ Visit to the Brandenburg Gate
- ◆ Meeting with Country Team, U.S. Embassy
- ◆ Visit to “Jakob-Kaiser-Haus” Bundestag and Meetings with Niels Annen, Foreign Policy Spokesman, and Fritz Felgentreu, Bundestag Defense Committee
- ◆ Visit to the Aspen Institute and Panel Discussion
- ◆ Visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Meeting with Oliver Owzca, Director of the North America Desk
- ◆ Visit to the Topography of Terror Museum
- ◆ Dinner Hosted by Ambassador John Emerson and Mrs. Kimberly Marteau Emerson
- ◆ Visit to the Berlin Wall Memorial Guided by Dr. Axel Klausmeier
- ◆ Visit to Berliner Stadtmission’s Kruppstr. 16 Refugee Shelter
- ◆ Meeting with Anne Wizorek, Social Media Consultant, Author, and Activist
- ◆ Meeting with Joschka Fischer, Former Foreign Minister and Former Vice Chancellor of Germany
- ◆ Visit to the German Marshall Fund for Roundtable Discussion
- ◆ Visit to the Federal Chancellery and Meeting with Detlef Wächter, Chief, U.S. & Canada Security Policy Desk
- ◆ Visit to ARD TV Studio and Meetings with Eva Marock, Communications Director and Tina Hassel, Bureau Chief and Former Washington Correspondent

- ◆ Visit to the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe
- ◆ Visit to Konzerthaus Berlin and Meeting with Dr. Raphael von Hoensbroech, Managing Director
- ◆ Visit to Glienicke Bridge
- ◆ Visit to the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Meeting with the Institute’s Climate Researchers
- ◆ Visit to Cecilienhof Palace
- ◆ Meeting with Özcan Mutlu, MdB (Green Party)

SPECIAL EVENTS

- ◆ White House Fellows “Holiday Bowl” in the Truman Bowling Alley
- ◆ Mid-Year Commissioners’ Meeting Presentations
- ◆ Fellows Dinner #1 Hosted by Jeff and Mary Zients
- ◆ Supreme Court Fellows Annual Lecture Featuring Justice Breyer
- ◆ Fellows Dinner #2 Hosted by Jeff and Mary Zients
- ◆ Conversation with Adam Grant Hosted by Jean and Steve Case
- ◆ Kennedy Center Performances in the President’s Box
- ◆ Spring Garden Tour at the White House
- ◆ Fellows’ Self-Directed Reflection Sessions

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- ◆ Career Night with the White House Fellows at Covenant House
- ◆ Age in Place Service Event
- ◆ Food for All DC Service Event
- ◆ Restoring Historic Woodlawn Cemetery in Ward 7



Placement Report

Passing the half way mark of our fellowship year, I am in awe of the tremendous opportunity I have had working at the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT). Admittedly, I was nervous about being placed at an agency where I had virtually no experience. But that is exactly what I wanted to get out of the fellowship; an adventure to explore new areas, broaden my fund of knowledge and get out of my comfort zone all while gaining a better understanding of the importance of public service and leadership.

At first glance, I thought the majority of the work would deal directly with infrastructure, ensuring that America's bridges, roads and highways continue to get people where they need to go. But the work being done under the leadership of Secretary Anthony Foxx encompasses so much more. I have had the privilege of working on a variety of projects that promote economic mobility as well as improve health. Under Secretary Foxx's Ladders of Opportunity agenda, I have elevated the many health related initiatives that are occurring across the modes, offering my clinical and public health expertise while learning about the importance and challenges of cross sector engagement. Being able to incorporate health into a non-traditional setting has been both rewarding and fulfilling.

Participating in interagency collaboration was one of the many experiences I wanted to have as a White House Fellow. I have taken the lead at U.S. DOT on an initiative with the Department of Education, Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Domestic Policy Council at the White House to advance socioeconomic integration in communities. This unique opportunity has positioned

me to reach across sectors and work with senior U.S. DOT officials to align our efforts and promote cross pollination with our local stakeholders to help to reverse the consequences of poverty and racial segregation. This has allowed for a broader understanding of public policy while working on issues around social justice.

As I look ahead to the remaining months of the fellowship, I am eager to continue to engage in projects that not only challenge me but also enrich my development as a public servant and leader. This has been one of the most formative seasons of my career and I am incredibly grateful for the collective experience as a White House Fellow.

BY KAMILLAH WOOD

U.S. Department of Transportation



Kamillah Wood at the U.S. Department of Transportation's Washington headquarters.

Help us recruit the next class!

There are still many ways you can get involved with the program. Here are five things you can do to help us reach potential applicants:

1. **Engage One-on-One.** Identify exceptional individuals who could become White House Fellows and encourage them to apply.
2. **Send an Email.** Please share information with your professional and social networks.
3. **Utilize Social Media.** Post messages promoting the program to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. using #WHFellows #BecomeaWHF
4. **Sponsor an Event.** Consider hosting an outreach event. White House Fellows program staff will lend support and provide background materials.
5. **Leverage Earned Media.** We invite you to submit op-eds, contribute to news stories, and/or author blog posts to share your experiences with the White House Fellows program.

Thank you from the Fellows Office

- ◆ We are grateful to U.S. Ambassador John Emerson, his wife Kimberly Marteau Emerson, the U.S. Embassy staff in Berlin, and many others for their incredible generosity throughout the Fellows' international policy trip to Germany.
- ◆ Thank you to the sailors aboard the U.S.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower for welcoming the Fellows during their visit and offering them an experience they will never forget.
- ◆ We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Mary and Jeff Zients for hosting two wonderful dinners for the Fellows with a range of leaders in Washington.
- ◆ This spring we have had many generous White House Fellows alumni host Reading Groups in cities around the country. We would like to thank the following alumni for serving as hosts and for their continued commitment to the White House Fellows Program:
 - ◆ 1/30 — Washington, DC • Debra Kurshan
 - ◆ 2/6 — New York, NY • Diane Yu
 - ◆ 2/6 — Malibu, CA • Douglas Kmiec & Dennis Murphy
 - ◆ 2/6 — Seattle, WA • Nelson Dong & Steve Hill
 - ◆ 2/11 — Denver, CO • Gail Klapper & Steve McConahey
 - ◆ 2/13 — Chicago, IL • Chris Day & David Iglesias
 - ◆ 2/13 — Sarasota, FL • Jim Padilla
 - ◆ 2/20 — Miami, FL • Willy Ferrer
 - ◆ 2/20 — Foxborough, MA • Scott Berns
 - ◆ 2/20 — San Mateo, CA • Chris Moore & George Drysdale
 - ◆ 2/27 — Washington, DC • Teresa Schwartz & Cara LaPointe
- ◆ We would like to thank our Spring 2016 interns, **Taylor Sarman and Linda Wang**. They were instrumental in supporting our application efforts, among other things. We will miss them!



About the WHF Program

The White House Fellows program is a nonpartisan program that offers exceptional young leaders firsthand experience working at the highest levels of the Federal government. **For more information, please visit:** www.whitehouse.gov/participate/fellows.

Please send any comments, questions, or other newsletter-related communication to: whitehousefellows@whf.eop.gov

