

Testimony of Amiko Matsumoto  
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Chair Kilmer, Vice-Chair Timmons, and members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, thank you for the invitation to join you today and for the important work you are doing to modernize Congress. My name is Amiko Matsumoto, and I oversee the internship program for the Partnership for Public Service. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to making the federal government more effective for the American people. I am pleased to be able to share the inner workings of our intern program, which is an integral part of our organization. Our intern program not only provides work experience and growth for interns, the Partnership benefits by the talent and the growth that occurs for our teams and those involved in working with our interns. I am honored to share three of the effective components of our approach.

For context, we recruit interns nationally through Handshake, an online platform designed to democratize opportunities, and through other networks. As a result, we have access to a broad range of applicants from colleges and universities across the country.

We have three cohorts of interns per year; a group of approximately 20 interns joins us each fall, spring and summer for 3-4 months each. Our interns are typically college students, recent graduates or graduate students. We pay interns, and our hiring process includes steps for equity and inclusion to help ensure diverse hires. Paying interns is critically important to our strong support for diversity, equity and inclusion.

There are three aspects of our internship program that I would like to highlight today: our program structure, our work with supervisors and ways we engage interns throughout our organization.

First, we are intentional in how we structure our intern program. Prior to recruiting for each cohort, we ask each team to identify specific projects that interns can assist with in the coming months. This allows us to build portfolios for interns and hire for those needs specifically. It also provides each team with the opportunity to reflect on best ways to engage the interns and ensure that their time is well-spent.

We deliberately start and end the interns in each cohort at the same time. This enables us to realize efficiencies by grouping interns together for onboarding and professional development throughout their term. Equally important, this cohort model provides ample opportunity for interns to meet and develop relationships with their peers.

At the beginning of their term, each intern is assigned a supervisor in their home department, as well as a buddy, who is a staff member from a different part of the organization and outside the intern's reporting line.

Additionally, we have three intern coordinators who share responsibility for program operations including professional development hiring and serve as points of contact for the interns. They work with our staff to ensure the program is aligned with the organization's talent needs and strategy.

The supervisor, coordinators, buddy and staff, along with peers in the cohort, form a robust support system that provides our interns with multiple resources to help them navigate the organization.

To ensure expectations are clear for both the intern and the Partnership, each intern develops a learning agreement with their supervisor that codifies what the intern will work on and their professional development interests. The supervisor meets regularly with the intern throughout the term to review work products and discuss growth opportunities.

We provide professional development throughout each intern term. This includes weekly or bi-weekly meetings that provide a space for interns to discuss challenges and gain experience presenting their work to others. They also receive training on a variety of skills needed in a professional setting such as notetaking, Excel and networking.

The second topic I would like to discuss is the focus on our supervisors. Supervisors are selected based on their interest, capacity and readiness. We understand that our supervisors need to be equipped to help interns navigate what may be their first professional experience, from managing time to creating a quality work product. We work with supervisors to ensure they have the communication and management skills necessary to assist interns in a meaningful way. We train intern supervisors to provide effective feedback that includes completing mid- and end-of-term performance assessments based on the intern's learning agreement. Intern supervisors learn how to delegate, respond to accommodation requests related to the Americans with Disabilities Act and approve timesheets and sick or vacation leave.

Our supervisors meet monthly with intern coordinators and HR staff to exchange ideas, share concerns and receive program updates. By ensuring these supervisors are well-equipped to provide interns with a quality experience, they develop leadership skills that far outlast an intern term.

My third point focuses on integrating interns into the life of the organization. Though interns are with us a short time, welcoming them as team players in our organization has many benefits. Here's how we do it:

- Each cohort meets with members of our C-suite, and we encourage supervisors to help their interns set up informational interviews with other staff.
- We encourage interns to take full advantage of activities and events for the whole Partnership community to get a clear idea of our mission and gain perspective on the value of public service. Some examples of those activities include participation in service projects and book clubs, attending report releases, and brown bags with our board members.
- We have redoubled our efforts to keep the community connected as we've worked remotely during COVID. We have scheduled virtual coffees as well as organization-wide activities like virtual BINGO and trivia competitions to provide a range of touchpoints and increase comradery.

- We actively solicit feedback and ideas from interns, including a mid-point check-in with the coordinators and HR staff to discuss what worked and what could be improved. We also conduct an exit survey that provides data to drive decision-making as we prepare for the next cohort.

By investing in our interns, we develop a talent pipeline that has resulted in several full-time hires – roughly 10 percent of our current full-time staff started as Partnership interns. And when our interns are hired someplace other than the Partnership, we have created through them a cadre of ambassadors who understand the value of public service, can champion our work and are skilled to make a positive difference wherever they go.

We believe that investing in a high-quality intern program matters to interns and to our organization's ability to fulfill our mission. Thank you for your interest in improving the intern experience, wherever that may be. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.