

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

June 16, 2014

[Andrea Estrada](#)

For the Good of the Community

Laura Barley has always loved the great outdoors, and over the past year, the new zoology graduate had a rare opportunity to share her passion with local elementary schoolchildren. Barley was one of 10 UC Santa Barbara students participating in an internship program sponsored by the campus's [Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life](#).

Known formally as the Sara Miller McCune Endowed Internship and Public Service Program, the initiative enables students to integrate nonprofit engagement into their studies. The yearlong program, which was established in 2008, is open to juniors and seniors. It provides the students with stipends of \$2,000 as well as eight units of course credit, the latter they earn through a fall-quarter preparatory seminar that studies the role and value of nonprofits. During winter and spring quarters they serve as paid interns, working 10 hours per week for local nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations.

"The purpose of the program is to give the students an opportunity to learn about work in government and in private nonprofits — what they do, how they do it and the importance of volunteering in a democracy," said Wade Clark Roof, J.F. Rowney Professor of Religion and Society and director of the Capps Center. Roof teaches the fall-quarter seminar as well as the spring-quarter Independent Studies course all interns are required to take.

In addition to Barley, who worked with the Wilderness Youth Project (WYP), the 2013-14 interns included Rachel Wachtel, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in

political science, and Franz Wayne Rivera, who completed his bachelor's degree in global and international studies. Wachtel and Rivera interned at Pacific Standard magazine and the Scheinfeld Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation at Santa Barbara City College.

Other Capps Center interns were placed with Direct Relief, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Community Environmental Council, World Business Academy, Green Business Santa Barbara County and Just Communities.

"I think it has solidified for me that building connections in and with nature is what I really want to do," Barley said of her experience with WYP, an organization that seeks to help local schoolchildren develop a reverence and respect for their natural surroundings. "It's a process that helped me learn a lot about myself. And it has given me a huge catapult into what I want to do as a career. I don't have to get a 'real job' and do this 'nature stuff' on the side."

Michelle Howard, Barley's mentor at WYP, has great appreciation for the Capps interns and the program that supports them. "The structure of the program creates accountability," she said. "And we know we're going to get someone who's good at the job. They have vetted the students for us."

For Wachtel, who has always had an interest in public service and policy, an internship with Pacific Standard magazine helped her learn some important things about herself. "I loved Pacific Standard because it is a political magazine," she said. "So right off the bat I was interested. And I've always have been interested in writing, so this was a way I could explore both of those areas."

"What I find unique about Pacific Standard is it's a research-based magazine. Content is based on new studies that come out in a variety of fields," she continued. "I've never looked at news from that perspective — what governs our policy from a human behavior aspect."

Navigating databases and learning how to distinguish credible information from the not so credible helped Wachtel hone her research skills. "But I think I've learned that I don't want to go into journalism or reporting," she said. "It's not that I don't enjoy it, but the program made me think definitely that I want to go into the nonprofit sector — and one that's involved with income inequality."

Wachtel's mentor at Pacific Standard, Michael Fitzgerald, praised her research skills and positive attitude. "The Capps Center interns bring a lot of positive energy and enthusiasm to Pacific Standard," he said. "As a magazine of ideas about social issues and their solutions, we benefit greatly from the kind of youthful intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm that is unique to high achievers still in college.

"Rachel showed a lot of adaptability, shifting between different tasks on the fly — from proofreading to research to fact-checking — and helped us stay organized under tight deadlines," Fitzgerald said.

Over at Santa Barbara City College's Scheinfeld Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, director Melissa Moreno credited Rivera with providing high-caliber assistance to her global trade initiative.

"Franz had a lot of research skills and took initiative to bring himself up to speed on the grant initiatives and the State of California's 'Doing What Matters' campaign," she said. "This was critically important, because there was a huge learning curve and Franz was able to gain an in-depth understanding quickly to be effective on the project. He is thorough and detail-oriented, uses critical-thinking skills and writes well. All these skills were very important to have."

The internship at the Scheinfeld Center gave Rivera an opportunity to hone the real-world business and management skills that aren't necessarily emphasized in the academic environment. "It really complemented the theoretical coursework and helped to see the actual theoretical frameworks I was learning about," he said, "specifically those related to international trade and connections to public policy at the state level."

With his internship — and his undergraduate career at UCSB — now behind him, Rivera will begin a yearlong Congress-Bundestag Fellowship to study and work in Germany for one year. He is one of 75 participants selected from more than 700 applicants for the federally funded Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX).

Conceived by members of the U.S. Congress and the German Parliament (Bundestag), the CBYX program is supported financially by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, under the authority of the Fulbright-Hays Act, and by the Bundestag. Since the program was founded in 1984, approximately 1,700 Americans have been awarded this rare opportunity to

gain cultural, academic and practical work experience in Germany.

While there, Rivera will attend a two-month intensive German language course, study at a German university or professional school for four months and complete a five-month internship with a German company in his career field (public policy and international affairs). Participants are placed throughout Germany, and have the opportunity to learn about everyday German life from a variety of perspectives.

According to Roof, many Capps Center interns have decided to make careers working in the nonprofit sector, at least for a little while. “We have had over 100 interns over the 10 years and many of them have gone to work in the Peace Corps, Teach for America or in some other service-type program,” he said. “Currently we have former interns working in various countries around the world.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.