Call it the "Harrisburg Moment" with a capital "M." It happens to every intern who participates in the Pennsylvania Capital Semester, a program that takes place at Temple University Harrisburg and provides undergraduates with semester-long, credit-earning, total-immersion experiences in Pennsylvania's state capital.

It happened to Sean Rossman, SCT '11, on the first day of his internship as a reporter with Pennsylvania Legislative Services in 2009. Just after lunch, his boss asked him to grab his notebook and walk over to the governor's press conference in the State Capitol building. He did not ask the governor any questions. But for Rossman, a journalism and political science major with aspirations of writing about state government, what he got was priceless—a chance to listen to veteran reporters ask tough questions.

Social work major Andrew Edgar, Class of 2012, experienced his Harrisburg Moment in 2010. As an intern with Pennsylvania's Office of Long-Term Living, he attended a meeting with the governor's policy chief and every state agency director, and heard commonwealth policies discussed in a direct, unflinching way. Edgar was enthralled.

Senior Dominick Lebo's Harrisburg Moment occurred during his 2010 internship with State Rep. Thomas R. Caltagirone, then majority chair of the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee. Lebo was invited to sit in as high-ranking party leaders and their top staffers discussed a bill about mandatory minimum prison sentences. He was privy to high-level political strategy and was asked to keep what he heard to himself. That is when it hit him. Lebo was learning how decisions are made in Harrisburg—and how individuals can make a difference behind the scenes.

Sooner or later, the Harrisburg Moment hits every Pennsylvania Capital Semester intern square in the forehead: This is real government, not theory.

"As a political science major, I had an understanding of how government works," says Shelly-Ann Forrester, a senior majoring in political science and Spanish who interned in 2010. "But it's different seeing how it actually plays out in real life. There are some things you can't learn from a textbook."

**STUDENTS GAIN VALUABLE PUBLIC POLICY EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL SEMESTER PROGRAM IN THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS.**

**BY HILLEL J. HOFFMANN**
a PHILADELPHIA first

Pennsylvania Capital Semester—which is overseen by the Institute for Public Affairs in the College of Liberal Arts, but is open to students in all of Temple's schools and colleges—has placed 18 upperclassmen in internships in Harrisburg since it began in 2000. Eight more students will have begun internships by the time this issue of Temple Review is published. The program is the first of its kind at a Philadelphia-area college or university.

Internship coordinator and longtime Harrisburg insider Michael Cassidy, a former state representative and current adjunct political science instructor at Temple University Harrisburg, places each program intern in a position directly related to that student's major. Depending on their placement, interns work on legislation, constituent service, policy research, public relations, grassroots campaigns, special events, press releases and press conferences, economic development projects, news reporting, lobbying and advocacy, fundraising and more—all while staying on track for graduation by earning up to 15 credits.

In addition to their professional responsibilities, Pennsylvania Capital Semester interns take courses in government and public policy at Temple University Harrisburg and, in most cases, live within a block or two of both campus and the State Capitol building in International House, a residential facility for students from around the world.

In late August, many interns arrive in Harrisburg inexperienced and timid. By December, after being exposed to the capital's day-to-day realities, they leave battle-tested and ready for new challenges. "One of the most amazing things I witness every year is the transformation of the interns from being shy and withdrawn to having more confidence and being mature professionals," says Michelle Atherton, CLA '06, assistant director of the Institute for Public Affairs. "It seems to happen overnight."

life after HARRISBURG

For 2009 Pennsylvania Capital Semester interns who have gone on to graduate from Temple, that confidence and maturity have translated into hard-to-find jobs in their chosen fields. Ryan Martin, CLA '11, was a political science major who assisted clients with government affairs research and community projects at Triad Strategies, a public affairs firm. Though his internship did not lead to a job immediately, Martin took advantage of Harrisburg's plentiful networking opportunities and wrangled an interview with State Rep. John Rafferty, LAW '88. Now, he is a legislative assistant on Rafferty's staff.

Isabella Lopez, a senior Latin American studies major, works with State Rep. Jerry Stern during her internship in Harrisburg.

Andrew Edgar (left), a social work major in the Class of 2012, speaks with State Rep. Mark Cohen.
"The Capital Semester internship is a great way to network," Martin says. "In politics, that's the name of the game. You can be really smart, but you have to know people to get a job."

There was a time when careers in public service were seldom launched by internships. It still is not a requirement, but Cassidy says the jump-start that is provided by interning in policy at the state, federal or local level has become the best way to break in. Yet Cassidy also stressed that Pennsylvania Capital Semester internships are not only for students who want to work in government after graduation.

"The skills that interns learn extend beyond the public sector," Cassidy says. "As an employee, you're eventually going to have to deal with state, local or federal government. Our students are comfortable working in that environment. That ability is more important than ever—especially during a recession."

It's hard to put a price tag on the benefits students receive from participating in Pennsylvania Capital Semester. But Joseph McLaughlin Jr., CLA '92, '99, director of the Institute for Public Affairs and assistant dean for external affairs in the College of Liberal Arts, says that both Temple and the commonwealth also get something out of the program.

"The students are great representatives of Temple," he says. And, the university is more visible in the halls of the capitol. In return, the commonwealth gets a steady stream of motivated, talented, well-educated young people, many of whom will end up in public service, perhaps for the state—a career path that might not have opened up for them without the internships.

It's a three-way symbiotic relationship that elected officials have come to appreciate.

"It's good to see students from Temple in the capitol, because students from Central Pennsylvania schools have dominated the placement of interns in Harrisburg," says State Rep. Mark B. Cohen, whose office employed Daniel Goldstein, CLA '10, a former Pennsylvania Capital Semester intern now serving on the staff of the Business Industry Political Action Committee.

"Pennsylvania Capital Semester is a great program for students, because internships can lead to jobs," Cohen says. "Sometimes, interns can even influence policy. I'm delighted that Temple is participating, and I hope that other colleges and universities in the Philadelphia region will follow its lead."

To learn more about the Pennsylvania Capital Semester program, visit temple.edu/ipa/opportunities and click "The Pennsylvania Capital Semester."

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