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Rockefeller Internship Report  
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This summer I was an Eisenhower intern at the Republican National Committee Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Eisenhower program accepts about fifty students every summer to work full-time in the various divisions of the RNC. In addition to the work experience and networking opportunities, the internship also offers a lunch lecture series featuring congressmen and other important political figures, and several off-site excursions around the Washington area.

I was the sole intern assigned to the newly-created RNC Strategy Division. This division was created to pull together and expand on functions that previously were spread out among several different divisions. The Strategy Division is responsible for analyzing polling data, maintaining the national "Voter Vault" database, and providing voter targeting expertise to campaigns all across the country. The Strategy shop also functions as a sort of in-house think-tank for developing new voter targeting and polling strategies.

My primary responsibility was to assist the Deputy Director of Strategy on his research projects. To my pleasant surprise I was given a large degree of autonomy and responsibility in overseeing projects. Throughout my internship I was given the opportunity to contribute my own ideas and recommendations, and thus had a real impact on the direction of the projects. My biggest assignment was to research and develop a theoretical framework for predicting voter turnout using polling data. The primary challenge in this project was finding a way to overcome "overreporting"—that is, the propensity for survey respondents to say they will vote when in fact they do not. Over several weeks of research we developed a formula that combined polling and demographic data to produce a likely voter estimate for each individual respondent.

During my internship I also had the good fortune to be selected for an unusual short-term intensive campaign project. I joined fourteen other interns in a five-day trip to Cincinnati, where we provided last-minute reinforcements to a congressional special election campaign. Our team made 20,000 phone calls in four days, and our candidate ended up winning the election by about 2,000 votes. We felt an enormous sense of accomplishment because we knew that we contributed very significantly to the outcome and may very well have made the critical difference.

The most valuable things I am taking away from my internship are a vastly increased awareness of how the political machine functions, and the many contacts I made throughout the summer, both in and out of work. My goal for this upcoming year is to get a job in field or event staff for one of the 2006 Senate races. Between the RNC experience on my resume and the contacts I have made, I am confident that I will be able to obtain such a position. The biggest challenge for the near future will be maintaining all the professional and personal relationships I made over the summer during the busy Dartmouth school year.