



Class of 1964 Internship Fund

INTERN PROFILE



Isabella Dunbar '23 The Brookings Institution

Isabella Dunbar '23 hails from Rochester, Minnesota and graduated first in her class from Mayo High School as an AP Scholar with Distinction and National Merit Finalist. At Mayo, Isabella captained the debate team, earning awards at the state level, and founded a global affairs club, competing nationally her senior year. She also served as an executive board member for her county's youth commission and as the district treasurer for Key Club's Minnesota-Dakotas District. At Dartmouth, Isabella plans to major in economics or quantitative social science and minor in public policy. She has joined the Mock Trial Society, become a leader-in-training in the Dartmouth Outing Club, serves as a senior editor for the World Outlook Undergraduate Journal, and works as a research intern in the Environmental Studies Department. After graduation, Isabella plans to attend law or graduate school and pursue a career in law or foreign service.

Isabella was funded by the Rockefeller Center for a Fall 2020 internship, with generous support from the Class of 1964 Internship Fund.

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Executive Summary from Isabella's final report:


During the fall of 2020, I interned with The Brookings Institution in the Economic Studies program (ES), within the Center on Regulation and Markets. For my work, I attended many virtual events led by economic experts on a wide range of pressing topics such as the economic inefficiency of current cannabis regulation to the financial implications of overdraft fees. I also contributed to Economic Studies Fellow Aaron Klein's blogposts, articles, and in-depth research on economic policy intricacies. Though I worked on various projects, there was one that was especially beneficial. I crafted a thoroughly researched commentary submission in response to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network's (FinCEN) Advance Notice of Public Rulemaking (ANPR) for new Anti-Money Laundering (AML) legislation changes. This stretched my writing and research skills, from its conception all the way through to the polishing stage.

Now that the internship has ended, I am eager to apply all that I learned to my coursework and future career. I have decided to major in economics, which will allow me to directly apply the knowledge I gained at Brookings on macroeconomic analysis. Furthermore, I will be minoring in public policy, so the strengthened understanding of policy in action will help me meaningfully contribute to course discussions on similar problems. I am interested in pursuing a career in international development or national security, both of which will benefit from the networking and leadership skills I gained throughout the course of this internship.

The three most positive parts of my internship were the abundance of interesting events to attend, the intern cohort, and the practical feedback. The Brookings Institution hosts a multitude of events across its programs and, as an intern, I was encouraged to attend any that caught my eye. In addition, while most Brookings events are open to the public, there were also valuable informal discussions and lunch talks that allowed me to hear top experts in their fields casually discuss ideas and even network with them. I felt honored and inspired at the wealth of knowledge available to me. The second most positive part was the bond I formed with the other interns and research assistants in my program. Even though it was an entirely virtual term, I was able to bond with the other interns through weekly zooms, professional development lessons, socials, and even a trivia team. The support I received from them and the wonderful research assistants in my program was one of the most enjoyable elements of the internship. Finally, I greatly appreciated the useful feedback that I received from Aaron Klein on my writing and charts. The specificity of suggestions on how to decide what information to highlight and keep the audience in mind was particularly effective.

My experience at the Brookings Institution has given me a fresh perspective on my approach to my current academics and my future. I was able to hear about the career paths of countless accomplished people and I was surprised by just how heterogenous their paths were. Even within the same fields, there was so much variety in how scholars came to work at Brookings. This made me reevaluate how I view my own future. Now I see it less as a long-term plan and more as a quest to follow what I am passionate about, even as that changes. I also intend to apply that to my coursework. Although I realize the importance of planning out credits, I am determined to take courses that I am truly excited about.

Working in a public policy organization taught me more than I expected about professional life in D.C., even with the virtual setting, and made me seriously introspect about what my ideal work life balance will be when I enter the workforce. I gained insight into the cliché that “Washington D.C. is really like a small town” and saw first-hand how important the networks are that create the “small town” feel. Before this experience, I never considered what kind of work style is best suited to my personality. Seeing the vast difference between the atmosphere and pace of a think tank versus a job on the hill or in the private sector was eye-opening. Simply by engaging in this work environment, I feel I have learned a substantial amount about my own ideal work situation.

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Prior to interning at the Brookings Institution, I participated in a few other Rockefeller Center Programs that helped prepare me for my experience. Namely, I participated in Dartmouth Leadership Attitudes and Behaviors (D-LAB) and the First-Year Fellows (FYF) program. Both ensured that I entered this experience with key leadership and communication strengths. It's difficult to have the confidence to do your best work as an intern, when all those around you are so much your senior. The Civic Skills Training (CST) component of FYF was particularly applicable to the frequent networking opportunities offered at Brookings, which would have felt completely foreign to me if not for that preparation. Overall, the discussion practice and training in these programs helped me maintain my composure when faced with situations where I felt outpaced or challenged.

In addition to this key preparation from Rockefeller Center programs, the Center also provided me with the grant for this internship. I would not have been able to have all of these beneficial experiences without that grant. I am truly grateful to the Rockefeller Center, its staff and the Class of 1964 for providing such incredible support.