



Class of 1971 Internship Fund INTERN PROFILE



Ben Vagle '22 The American Enterprise Institute

Ben Vagle, '22, is a government and economics double-major and a native of Denver, Colorado. In high school, Ben founded the engineering education website DIYwalkers, which was featured on Colorado Public Radio and the Discovery Channel. Since landing at Dartmouth, Ben has avidly pursued his interests in government, economics, and public policy. Currently, Ben works as a student assistant to public programs at the Rockefeller Center, serves as editor-in-chief of World Outlook, Dartmouth's Journal of International Affairs, and performs research for Professor Valentino in the Government Department. In his spare time, Ben enjoys skiing, hiking, and biking in the hills of the Upper


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"The research conducted during the internship experience relates to my planned honors thesis on how the economic linkages between the United States and China will impact their rivalry."

Executive Summary from Ben's final report:

During the summer term of 2021, I had the opportunity to intern for the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) on its Military Strategy and Defense Budget (MSDB) team. The MSDB team is led by AEI Resident Scholar Mackenzie Eaglen and studies issues such as defense budgeting, military modernization, and defense acquisition reform.

As an intern, I worked directly with Mackenzie's research assistant Hallie Coyne and another intern to conduct research and data analysis on military strategy and defense budgeting topics, as well as to write briefings, research reports, and opinion pieces that were distributed and published on a regular basis. Issues that we analyzed over the course of the summer included the impacts of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, President Biden's FY22 defense budget, military modernization, and U.S.-China competition.

The internship was a 40-hour per week experience. Our team would start the day with a phone call with Hallie where we would discuss upcoming deadlines and workflow progress. From there, I would work on a time-sensitive literature review or research briefing. As a side note, my internship was remote due to COVID, and I was able to reside in Hanover for much of the summer while working out of Baker Library—this meant that for lunch I could take walks around the Green! Often, the MSDB team would have multiple, long-form assignments due over the course of the week, such as research reports and opinion pieces. I'd return to my workstation after lunch to chip away at these longer assignments until the end of the day.

Working at AEI was a fantastic way to gain a deep familiarity with the ideas and personalities of the many think tankers, scholars, and officials working on behalf of America's national defense. I left the experience with a better knowledge of and a deep respect for those willing to pursue careers in public service. I hope to return to DC after graduation, and I'm grateful for the insights and perspectives that I've gained while working for AEI.

Working at AEI provided excellent exposure to both the DC think tank circuit and the national security establishment. I found both to be very interesting—though if I had to choose between the two, I would at this stage prefer to make a difference in government. Interestingly, the sense that I got while at AEI was that most of the high-level AEI experts had years of government experience, and most of the research assistants were hoping to leverage their time at AEI into a government position. While a career in public service might involve a think tank position, I think this would be a steppingstone to government service.