CITP – PIT-UN Grant Narrative Report
Grant Period: November 01, 2019 - August 31, 2020

1. Summary of Key Results

1.1.   We successfully created a meaningful experience for a diverse group of fellows despite having to transition to a virtual program. We attracted qualified and talented students and paired them with host agencies that had them working on cutting-edge challenges related to tech policy.

2. Background and Problem Definition

2.1.   The project was designed to give students first-hand experience working with the government on developing and regulating public interest technology.

2.2.   The initial problem we sought to address was to match the interests of students with technical backgrounds who wanted exposure to public interest technology with the government agencies who had to understand the value that students could bring to their work. The goal was to build a pipeline for talent by exposing these students and agencies to the possibilities of working together.

2.3.   There are other institutions are working on similar projects to create opportunities for technologists to work in public service. To our knowledge, we fill a unique niche of matching students with federal, state, and local agencies and wrapping that within a co-curricular educational program where students can learn from experts and from each other.

2.4.   We worked with a wide range of universities to canvas student participation. We selected a cohort of nine students from six universities, who were placed in four host agencies.

2.5.   We defined diversity, equity, and inclusion broadly and consciously sought to expand opportunities for historically underrepresented students in our programs.

3. Development

3.1.   Our first step was to recruit students from a broad range of universities. Simultaneously, we reached out to several different government agencies to serve as potential hosts for the students.

3.2.   The primary change we made to the project was to move the program online because of the global pandemic.

3.3.   We evaluate the success of the project based on the feedback from the students as well as from the host agencies. We were pleased that our students

recommended the program to their peers. Equally, we were happy to see that the host agencies agreed to participate again in the following year, and that they were willing to help recruit other agencies to serve as potential hosts.

3.4.   The next steps in the project are to offer the program in the following year to a broader group of students and to a broader range of host agencies.

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5. Lessons Learned

5.1   There is a lot more work involved in recruiting and maintaining relationships with host agencies. Having a steady pipeline of funding will give them a better sense for what to expect.

6. Possibilities to Replicate

6.1   There are possibilities for other programs to replicate this experience for their students with local agency partners during the semester as well as over the summer. There is, however, value to having students connect across universities to build cohorts and a more diverse set of offerings.

7. General Information

7.1   For more information, please contact Mihir Kshirsagar – mihir@princeton.edu.

7.2   The project is entering its third year.

8.   Annexes & Publications

8.1.   Links

       8.1.1. https://citp.princeton.edu/programs/pit-summer-fellowship/

       8.1.2.   https://freedom-to-tinker.com/2021/01/21/citps-summer-fellowship-program-for-training-public-interest-technologists/

       8.1.3.   https://citp.princeton.edu/programs/pit-summer-fellowship-2020-student-bios/