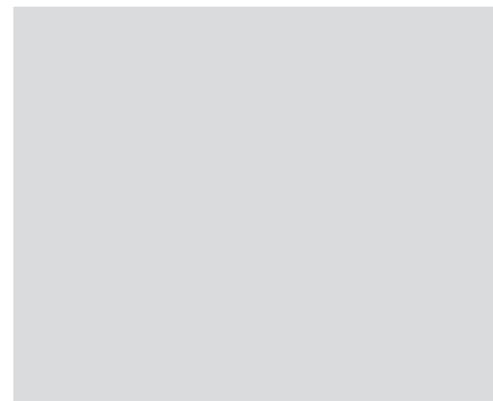




LEONARD D. SCHAEFFER  
FELLOWS IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

# 2025

## ANNUAL REPORT



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## By the Numbers

Since its launch in 2015, the Schaeffer Fellows program has continued to expand in scale, reach, and impact. The data that follows provides a snapshot of how the program has grown over its first eleven years.

467

Schaeffer Fellows supported since 2015

288

Internship offices over the lifetime of the program

93%

Alumni reported pursuing internships, fellowships, or jobs in public service after the program

5000+

Weeks of public service provided across the country

**USC** Leonard D. Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy & Government Service

The Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program is a flagship program of the USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy and Government Service. The Institute develops evidence-based solutions to address the nation's most pressing policy issues and supports students in becoming involved citizens.

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

The Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program continues to demonstrate the value of engaging young people in public service early in their professional journeys. In 2025, Fellows served across federal, state, and local government offices and agencies, applying their skills, analytical abilities, and dedication to initiatives addressing the complex challenges facing communities nationwide.

Through full-time summer internships, Fellows gained firsthand experience in government, conducted policy research on issues ranging from consumer protection to transportation expansion, advanced public health and environmental initiatives, and supported essential constituent services.

This year also brought significant growth for the program. In April, we celebrated the opening of the Schaeffer Institute's offices at the USC Capital Campus, now a dedicated home for programming, convenings, and the annual Schaeffer Fellows Summit in Washington, DC. Based on alumni feedback, the 2025 Summit was expanded to four days, providing Fellows additional time for professional development, networking, and exploring the nation's capital. The gathering's focus on personal reflection helped Fellows process their internship experiences and identify ways to maximize their learning and impact throughout the summer. To support ongoing professional development, program staff also launched weekly virtual Fellows Forums that offered structured space for ongoing reflection, skill-building, and connection across the cohort.

The foundation of the program is grounded in the strong partnerships that shape the fellowship experience. Internship supervisors and alumni mentors provide guidance that transforms day-to-day responsibilities into meaningful learning. Our Advisory Board, University Partners, and program staff work together to ensure the fellowship remains rigorous, distinctive, and impactful. Their dedication, and that of our growing alumni community, strengthens our shared mission of preparing the next generation of civic leaders.

This annual report celebrates the accomplishments of the 2025 Schaeffer Fellows as well as the growing impact of our alumni. Together, their stories demonstrate the importance of understanding how government operates in order to affect meaningful change. Reflecting on their recent experiences, I am encouraged by their curiosity, integrity, and dedication to improving public policy.

  
Leonard D. Schaeffer

2025 Fellows Leah Rockwell (UVA) and Nathalie Ceron (USC) network at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit

# MEET OUR TEAM

**LEONARD D. SCHAEFFER** is the founding Chairman & CEO of WellPoint, Inc. (now Elevance Health), which serves 45.7 million medical members. He is the Judge Robert Maclay Widney Chair and Professor at USC. Schaeffer's public service includes appointments as Administrator of the federal Health Care Financing Administration (now CMS) where he was responsible for the Federal Medicare and Medicaid programs, Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget of the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Director of the Bureau of the Budget for the State of Illinois, Chairman of the Illinois Capital Development Board, and Deputy Director of the Illinois Department of Mental Health.

In 2015, drawing on his own undergraduate experience as a congressional intern and his career in public service, Schaeffer launched the Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program at Princeton University and the University of Southern California. After a decade of growth and impact, he endowed the program in 2024 as a cornerstone of the newly established USC Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy and Government Service.

**ERICA LOVANO MCCANN, ED.D.** partnered with Leonard Schaeffer to establish the Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program at the University of Southern California in 2015 and subsequently led its expansion to additional partner universities. As Executive Director, she works closely with the Schaeffer Fellows Advisory Board to advance the program's strategic priorities. She also oversees the design and implementation of all programming, and ensures a consistent and high-quality experience for Fellows. Under her leadership, the program has strengthened institutional collaboration and cultivated a vibrant nationwide network of alumni.

**WILLA ERICKSON** joined the Schaeffer Fellows program in 2019 and has since played a central role in strengthening its visibility and operations. As Assistant Director, she coordinates communications, supports programming for Fellows and alumni, and facilitates assessment and reporting to demonstrate program impact. Based at USC, Erickson also manages the university's annual selection and internship placement process, collaborating with government offices and agencies to secure meaningful opportunities and pairing Fellows with supportive alumni mentors.

Left to right: Erica Lovano McCann, Leonard Schaeffer, and Willa Erickson



# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## Our Mission

The Leonard D. Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program funds government internships, provides professional development, and fosters mentorship for undergraduate students with exceptional potential. Schaeffer Fellows gain experience-based knowledge of government operations, a deeper understanding of the impact of public service, and the skills and motivation to join the next generation of civic leaders.



## Key Themes

The Schaeffer Fellows program is grounded in the following four key themes explored throughout professional development sessions and in the Schaeffer Fellows Resource Guide.

- Reflecting on Core Values
- Exploring Leadership Lessons
- Collaborating and Networking
- Developing Transferable Skills

## University Partners

Five universities facilitate a competitive internal process to select Schaeffer Fellows and connect them with government internships, supervisors, and alumni mentors.



## Fellowship Benefits

Schaeffer Fellows receive specialized support and a distinctive professional development experience that enhances their internship and prepares them for future opportunities.



### Internship Resources

- Living Stipend
- Resource Guide
- Supportive Supervisors



### Professional Development

- Virtual Orientation
- Schaeffer Fellows Summit
- Fall Recognition Events



### Dedicated Mentorship

- Alumni Mentors
- Institutional Partners
- Schaeffer Fellows Network

# PROGRAM PARTNERS

## Advisory Board

The Schaeffer Fellows Advisory Board plays a vital role in advancing the program's mission and amplifying its impact. Drawing on their own experience across government, academia, and the private and nonprofit sectors, board members provide strategic guidance to help align the program's priorities with those of current Fellows and a growing alumni community. Through their continued engagement and leadership, the Advisory Board has helped elevate the Schaeffer Fellows program as a model for cultivating the next generation of civic leaders.

**Leonard D. Schaeffer, Chair**  
Schaeffer Fellows Program Founder

**Jack Ebeler, Vice Chair**  
Former Acting Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

**William Antholis**  
Director and CEO, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia

**Sheila Burke**  
Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Senator Dole  
Faculty, Harvard Kennedy School of Government

**Kimberly de los Santos**  
Executive Director, Pace Center for Civic Engagement, Princeton University

**Carole Johnson**  
Former Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration  
President and CEO, University Hospital, Newark, NJ

**Jamie Kwong**  
2016 Schaeffer Fellow, University of Southern California  
Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Brian Osberg**  
Former Minnesota State Medicaid Director

**David Schaeffer**  
Brewster Foundation Representative

**Itcelia Segoviano-Ramirez**  
2018 Schaeffer Fellow, University of California, Berkeley  
Assistant Executive Director, Stiles Hall

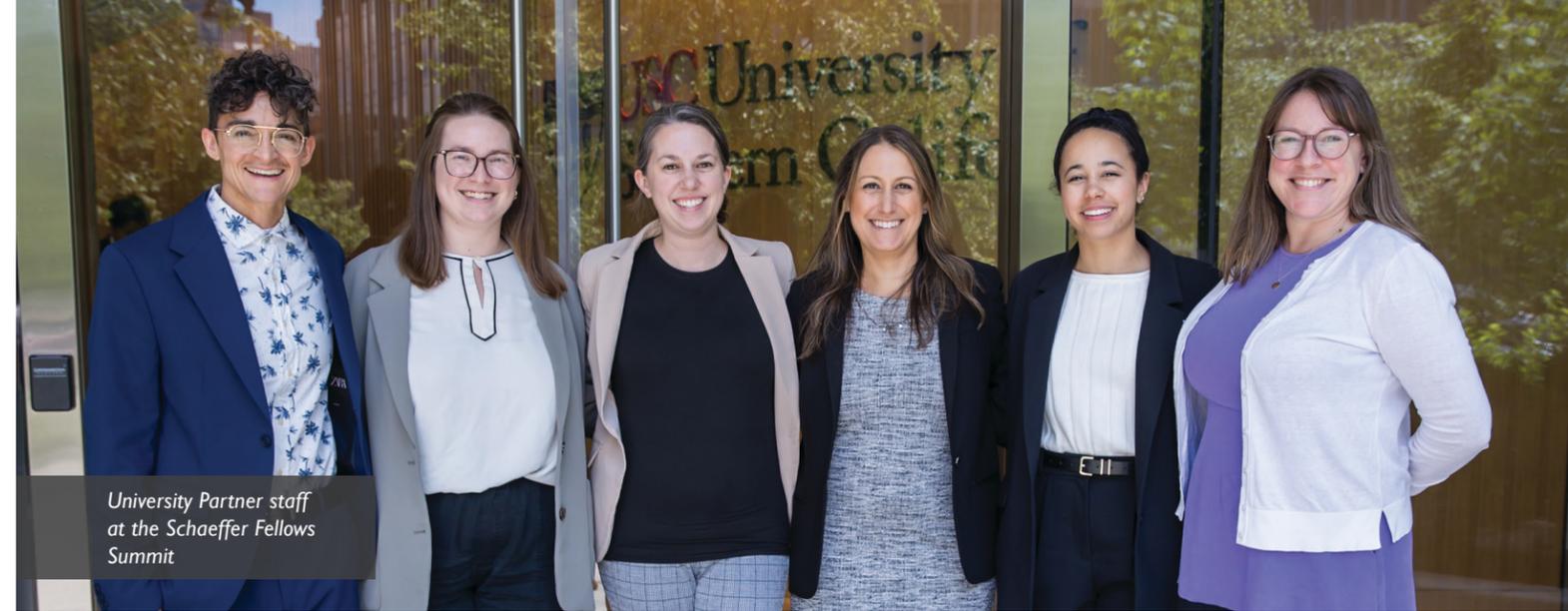
**Jacob Vaughan**  
Brewster Foundation Representative

### Ex-Officio Members

**Willa Erickson**  
Assistant Director, Schaeffer Fellows Program

**Dana Goldman**  
Executive Director, USC Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy & Government Service

**Erica Lovano McCann**  
Executive Director, Schaeffer Fellows Program



University Partner staff at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit

## University Partners

University partners identify and support exceptional undergraduates interested in how government works. Each year, they recruit, select, and place ten Fellows, pairing each with an alumni mentor. Through continued engagement, including at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit, partners strengthen Fellows' ties to the program, encourage sustained alumni involvement, and collaborate in expanding public service pathways for students.

## Alumni Mentors

Each Schaeffer Fellow is paired with an alumni mentor who provides individualized support in adjusting to the workplace, expanding professional networks, and clarifying career goals. Through regular conversations and shared experience, mentors help Fellows build confidence and make the most of their summer in public service.

## Institutional Partners

Through institutional partnerships, Schaeffer Fellows and alumni gain access to exclusive events, professional guidance, and conversations with distinguished leaders across government and related fields. In 2025, partners included:

- Brookings Institution
- Democracy House
- RAND Corporation
- The Washington Center
- The Volcker Alliance

## Internship Supervisors

Internship supervisors play a critical role in shaping the fellowship experience by providing Fellows with guidance, mentorship, and valuable professional development opportunities. Through hands-on learning and constructive feedback, supervisors help Fellows navigate complex policy environments while building practical skills and professional judgment. Supervisors empower Fellows to make meaningful contributions in their work and the communities they serve.



Jack Ebeler (middle) speaks with Fellows at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit



Board members at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit



Ricarda Suarez Moreno (U.C. Berkeley) with Congressman Mike Thompson

# 2025 PROGRAM EXPERIENCE



Fellows network with speakers at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit, including public service leaders panelist Sabrina Singh (fifth from left)

Table 2: Business Networks

Aiko	Halle
Alyssa	Iris
Amelia	Justine
Garrett	Kevin

Table 3: City of Belmont

Adriana-Pilar	Leah
Athena-Kate	Megan
Connor	Nadia
Kaila	

Table 4: Conservancy

Delina	Katlyn T.
Ily	Leon
Isabella	Mizah
Jerry	

Table 6: Federal Agencies

Izzy	Karrie
Jack K.	Sara
Katlyn B.	Tessa
Lawson	

Table 8: Philanthropic Partners

Myrah	Nathalie
Dev	Valeria
Diyana	

Table 10: State Agencies

Morris (Will)	Anais
Leah	Dev
Skye	Diyana

## Annual Program Cycle

### JANUARY—MARCH

#### Internship Hiring & Selection Process

University Partners facilitate selection and internship placement for ten Schaeffer Fellows at their respective campuses.

### APRIL—MAY

#### Final Selection & Virtual Orientation

Final selection decisions are sent to the central program. Fellows attend Virtual Orientation to prepare for the summer and meet their peers.

### JUNE—AUGUST

#### Internships & Summer Programming

Fellows work full-time in government, attend the Schaeffer Fellows Summit, and participate in programming offered by the central program, institutional partners, and alumni.

### SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER

#### Assessment & Fall Recognition

Central program staff collects comprehensive feedback from Fellows, alumni, and supervisors. They also visit each University Partner campus to host Fall Recognition Events.

### NOVEMBER—DECEMBER

#### Annual Report & Applications Open

After collecting feedback from key stakeholders, the central program staff produces an annual report, and applications open for the next summer.

# 2025 FELLOWS & INTERNSHIPS

## Harvard University

<b>Dev Ahuja</b>	Office of the Mayor of New York City, Criminal Justice
<b>Iris Cheng</b>	U.S. International Development Finance Corporation
<b>Cynthia Garcia</b>	Office of Los Angeles District Attorney
<b>Jack Kelly</b>	U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
<b>Adriana-Pilar Mejia</b>	City of Paterson, NJ - Business Administration Office
<b>Kevin Scanlan</b>	U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia
<b>Will Smialek</b>	Office of Congressman Maggie Goodlander (NH-02)
<b>Kaitlyn Tran</b>	U.S. International Development Finance Corporation
<b>Jack Tueting</b>	Office of Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (VA-10)

## Princeton University

<b>Myrah Charles</b>	U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York
<b>Hallie Graham</b>	Office of the Attorney General of Massachusetts
<b>Dhyana Mishra</b>	Office of the Governor of New Jersey, Policy Office
<b>Tatiana Nazlymov</b>	Office of U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (MD)
<b>Nathan Nguyen</b>	New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Climate Change & Clean Energy
<b>Ifunanya Obianwu</b>	Office of U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff (GA)
<b>Connor Romberg</b>	Office of U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN)
<b>Darden Shuman</b>	Office of Congressman Terri Sewell (AL-07)
<b>Isabella Valentine</b>	New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection, Office of Legal Affairs
<b>Lawson Wright</b>	U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York

## University of California, Berkeley

<b>Noor Alramadan</b>	Office of California Assemblymember David Alvarez (CA-80)
<b>Shawn Ree Canin</b>	District Office of Congressman Lateefah Simon (CA-12)
<b>Megan Chan</b>	Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles, International Affairs
<b>Kaila DuFour</b>	Office of Congressman Doris Matsui (CA-07)
<b>Leon Felix Gutierrez</b>	Office of Congressman Johnny Olszewski (MD-02)
<b>Justine Garcia</b>	Office of Congressman Brad Sherman (CA-32)
<b>Lauren Gonzalez</b>	Office of the Attorney General of New York, Environmental Protection Bureau
<b>Amelia Monsour</b>	Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Office of Ranking Member
<b>Valeria Pasillas</b>	California Department of Education, Executive Team
<b>Ricarda Suarez Moreno</b>	Office of Congressman Mike Thompson (CA-04)

## University of Southern California

<b>Aiko Abo Dominguez</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Lapenta Internship Program
<b>Mia Albright</b>	Office of U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen (NV)
<b>Nadia Bashier</b>	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
<b>Nathalie Ceron</b>	Office of U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan (NM)
<b>Isabella Del Gaudio</b>	U.S. Space Force, SpaceWERX
<b>Skye Dizon</b>	Office of Congressman David Schweikert (AZ-01)
<b>Jerry Li</b>	U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California
<b>Leah Nwizugbo</b>	California Department of Justice, External Affairs Division
<b>Niloofar Sahimi</b>	California Natural Resources Agency, Office of Exposition Park Management
<b>Sara Taghizadeh Milani</b>	U.S. Government Accountability Office

## University of Virginia

<b>Kaitlyn Brooks</b>	U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Trustee Program
<b>Alyssa Bui</b>	Arlington County, VA, Economic Development
<b>Athena-Kate Canavos</b>	Office of the Mayor of Richmond, VA
<b>Sydney Harris</b>	Office of the Attorney General of Virginia
<b>Micah Israel</b>	Office of the Comptroller of Maryland
<b>Anaïs Naish</b>	Virginia Department of Health, Chickahominy Health District
<b>Delina Ogbe</b>	Virginia American Revolution 250 Commemoration (VA250)
<b>Leah Rockwell</b>	Albemarle County, VA, Office of Performance and Strategic Planning
<b>Harper Tran</b>	Fairfax County, VA, Economic Development
<b>Garrett Uthlaut</b>	Culpeper County, VA, Economic Development

## About the 2025 Cohort:

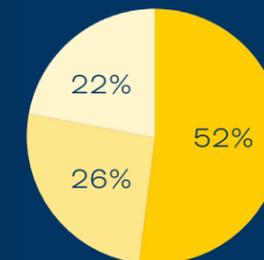
28

New internship sites at all levels of government

62%

Assigned mentors were both university and Schaeffer Fellows program alumni

▲ 8% Increase from 2024



Government Level

- Federal Internships
- State Internships
- Local Internships



U.S. cities where 2025 Schaeffer Fellows completed ten-week summer internships

# FELLOWS IN ACTION

Schaeffer Fellows gain meaningful internship experiences through full-time, ten-week positions at all levels of government. Their experiences spanned the breadth of public service in policy areas such as:

- Infrastructure
- Congressional constituent services
- Civic education

## Internship Supervisor Feedback

The program received feedback from 75% of the 2025 internship host offices.

**96%** Respondents felt the Schaeffer Fellow was well prepared for their internship

**96%** Respondents felt the Schaeffer Fellow contributed meaningfully to the team's work

**96%** Respondents felt the Schaeffer Fellow demonstrated growth in skills and confidence

**98%** Respondents felt the Schaeffer Fellow met the office's expectations

“ Building a strong network of public servants is incredibly powerful. It drives both leadership and development forward.”

— Ana Rocio Castillo Romero, Senior Process Improvement Leader for City of Paterson, NJ



Jack Tueting (Harvard) with Congressman Suhas Subramanyam

## Infrastructure



Nadia Bashier (left) with California State Assemblymember Sade Elhawary (CA-57) at LAX Metro Station grand opening

## INSIDE TRACK ON PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Nadia Bashier**, University of Southern California  
Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority

“My main responsibility [was] to streamline communication between internal departments and the Board of Director’s offices [including] management of spreadsheet trackers, revising reports, scheduling briefings, event planning/set-up, and devising organizational strategies for communication.” In addition, Nadia assisted the Sustainability Department within the Chief of Staff’s office with organizing meetings and research related to heat mitigation for the 2028 Olympics. She also supported planning for the grand opening of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission station by Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

As a continuing student at USC, Nadia stayed on with Metro as an assistant administrative analyst. She also received a scholarship from the Railway Association of Southern California (RASC) and was awarded the William Miller Scholarship by the American Public Transportation Foundation (APTF) at the 2025 American Public Transportation Association TRANSform Conference.

## POLICY RESEARCH & BUDGET INSIGHTS

**Dhyana Mishra**, Princeton University  
New Jersey Governor’s Policy Office

Dhyana worked on a range of policy topics including emerging technology, trade, and transportation. Her responsibilities included research and writing memos for senior decision-makers, drafting talking points, and collaborating with different agencies. In particular, Dhyana conducted research for an air traffic control pipeline program for Newark International Airport and assisted with preparing the FY 2026 budget. “I really enjoyed seeing the state budget get passed in late June. It was interesting to see the lead-up to that in terms of lobbying and legislative pressures, and the post-budget questions of implementation.”

Since completing the summer internship, Dhyana continued her studies at Princeton and was selected for the 2025–26 Gender and Security Fellowship awarded by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD) at Princeton University.



Dhyana Mishra (left) with New Jersey Governor, Phil Murphy

CONGRESS CLOSE TO HOME

**Shawn Ree Canin**, U.C. Berkeley  
 District Office of Congressmember Lateefah Simon (CA-12)

Shawn assisted with casework, attended community events, and answered and logged constituent calls. He also helped develop office procedures and operations, researched contacts across issue areas and interest groups within the district, and prepared memos, talking points, and policy proposals. In his internship, Shawn worked with field representative and 2022 Schaeffer Fellow, Gélser Zavala.

“I gained hands-on experience in both constituent services and policy development, from assisting with casework and community engagement to researching and drafting policy proposals.”

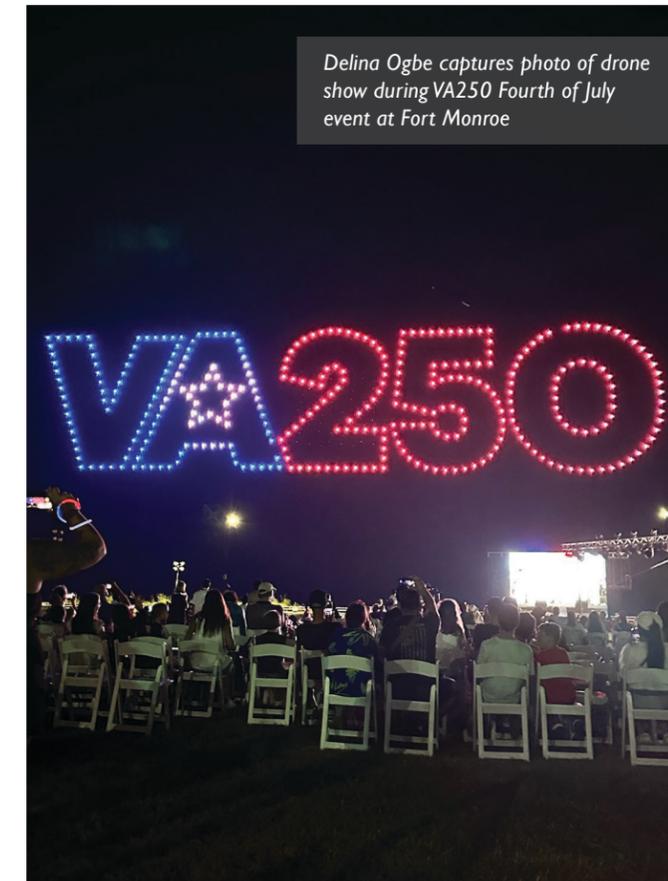
Following his summer internship, Shawn began his term as a Student Body Senator at U.C. Berkeley.

NAVIGATING CAPITOL HILL

**William Smialek**, Harvard University  
 Office of Congressmember Maggie Goodlander (NH-02)

William Smialek secured an office position with Congressmember Goodlander after previously working on her congressional campaign. Will shared about his congressional internship, “I was responsible for tour giving, memo drafting, note taking and [creating news clips] for my office. Contributions include my work to institutionalize the systems we put in place because we are a Freshman Office.” Reflecting on his experience during Fall Recognition, Will spoke about learning how politics are local and discovering where he could make a direct impact.

After returning to campus, Will was appointed to the next Harvard Institute of Politics executive team as vice president alongside Jack Tueting, another 2025 Harvard Schaeffer Fellow, who will serve as treasurer.



CIVIC FUTURES: EDUCATION FOR THE NATION’S 250TH

**Delina Ogbe**, University of Virginia  
 Virginia American Revolution 250 Commemoration (VA250)

As an intern, Delina developed and compiled impact reports for VA250’s grant-funded programs and events, generating a framework to assess the social, cultural, and educational impacts across Virginia. Delina also supported VA250’s Education Steering Committee, helping create toolkits for teachers and students to connect classroom learning to topics [such as] the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Virginia’s role in the American Revolution.

“While we looked at traditional quantitative measures such as visitor spending, employment generated, and infrastructure development... I recognized that true community impact goes far beyond numbers. I worked on capturing the social, cultural, and educational effects of these [VA250] events and how they bring people together, shape identity, and preserve local history.”



SHAPING STUDENT SUCCESS

**Valeria Pasillas**, U.C. Berkeley  
 California Department of Education, Executive Team

Valeria worked on internal operations and policy in the Superintendent’s Initiative Office, Communications Division, and Government Affairs Division. In the Superintendent’s Initiative Office, she directly supported the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Move the Needle project, an initiative designed to improve statewide literacy and math outcomes. Within the Communications Division, she supported public-facing communications with the media team. In the Government Affairs Division, she analyzed and briefed bills that impacted the Department of Education, scheduled meetings for state legislators, and attended committee hearings to deliver votes of support on legislation.

“Through this multi-division experience, I strengthened my skills in policy analysis, legislative advocacy, and communications while contributing directly to initiatives aimed at advancing equity and student achievement in California.”



# SCHAEFFER FELLOWS SUMMIT

Fellows attended the 2025 Schaeffer Fellows Summit in Washington, DC, from June 18–22. Hosted in the historic Dupont Circle area, the Summit included sessions at the USC Capital Campus, which houses the Washington, DC headquarters of the Leonard D. Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy & Government Service. Based on feedback from previous cohorts, the Summit was extended to allow additional time for professional development, networking, and exploring the nation's capital.

2025 cohort at the Schaeffer Fellows Summit in Washington, DC



## A Focus on Collaboration

Aligned with the program's mission, the 2025 Schaeffer Fellows Summit theme was **Collaborating for Community Impact**. This theme underscored how Fellows, informed by their experience in government, could leverage networks and cross-sector partnerships to drive meaningful change. Through civic education and group exercises, Fellows deepened their understanding of how public servants can collaborate effectively to produce responsive, inclusive, and effective policy solutions.

100%  
of Schaeffer Fellows reported:

- Greater connection with the Schaeffer Fellows program
- Stronger relationships with other Fellows
- Value in bringing the cohort together for a collective experience
- Interest in remaining involved as alumni

## Intersection of Self & Service

A defining element of the Schaeffer Fellows Summit is providing Fellows with dedicated time to reflect on their core values and motivations toward public service.

Sessions explored topics such as values-driven action and self-authorship. Through guided exercises and discussions focused on personal development, Fellows examined how their values and perspectives shape their decision-making and goals.

## Public Service Leaders Panel

Fellows heard from a leadership panel about their individual pathways in public service. Panelists are pictured below, from left to right:

- **Jack Ebeler** — Former Acting Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- **Matthew Fiedler** — Pechman Senior Fellow in Economic Studies and a senior fellow with the Center on Health Policy at the Brookings Institution
- **Sabrina Singh** — Former Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense
- **Ella Holman (moderator)** — People Experience Manager, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, U.S. House of Representatives



Ifunanya Obianwu (Princeton) works on case study group project

## Learning From Public Service Leaders



Public Service Leaders panel responds to questions about their career journeys

## Juneteenth in Nation's Capital

This year, the Summit included a full day for Schaeffer Fellows to explore the U.S. capital together. On the morning of Juneteenth, the group toured the National Museum of African American History & Culture, followed by a brief lunch stop at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In the afternoon, Fellows visited sites independently, including the White House, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the National Mall.



## Guidance for Professional Success

Elizabeth Wall (pictured right), Associate Director for Public Service & Government Career Community at the UVA Career Center, returned to lead a breakout session on professional job search tools and application preparation, with a focus on pursuing full-time roles in public service. Fellows received detailed resume feedback from Wall and Zoe Anderson, Coordinator for Internships & Career Services at the Harvard Institute of Politics, and practiced discussing their experience through common interview questions.



## Case Study on Public Projects

Fellows participated in an interactive case study that integrated public, private, and nonprofit perspectives, strengthening skills in collaboration and problem-solving while expanding their understanding of how stakeholders with differing priorities work together to drive positive community impact. Pictured right are Fellows brainstorming key points for their small group's stakeholder perspective presentation.



## Founder's Chat with Mr. Schaeffer

Schaeffer Fellows heard directly from Leonard Schaeffer about his time as an undergraduate government intern for former U.S. Senator Paul Douglas (IL) and how Schaeffer's internship laid the foundation for a career in the public and private sectors. Fellows had the opportunity to ask Mr. Schaeffer questions about how to approach their own careers.



## Alumni Perspectives Panel

Alumni facilitated a breakout session to discuss their academic and career journeys, and how they navigate professional challenges and opportunities. Panelists pictured from left to right:

- **Cameron McKenzie** — 2018 Fellow, Princeton
- **Manushri Desai** — 2021 Fellow, USC
- **Ariana Kretz** — 2023 Fellow, U.C. Berkeley
- **Kevin Bokoum** — 2024 Fellow, Harvard



## Keynote Dinner at the National Press Club

Michelle Woods served as the Vice President and Director of the RAND Homeland Security Research Division, and a senior defense researcher at RAND. As keynote speaker for the 2025 Schaeffer Fellows Summit, Woods reinforced core values as a foundation for leadership and encouraged Fellows to remain open to unexpected opportunities and change throughout their careers.





Fall Recognition at Princeton University



## FALL RECOGNITION EVENTS

In October, program staff visited all five University Partner campuses to host Fall Recognition events, bringing together each university's 2025 Schaeffer Fellows with administrators and local alumni for a formal moment of acknowledgment and transition.

During these gatherings, Fellows reflected on both the rewarding and challenging aspects of their internship experiences. Many highlighted the responsibility of engaging directly with constituents and the significance of being entrusted with work that had tangible impacts on their communities.



2024 Fellows Valerie Aronhalt (left) and Eleanor Love (right) with Mr. Schaeffer at USC

## Certificates of Recognition

Each year, the program continues its longstanding tradition of honoring the dedication and accomplishments of Schaeffer Fellows through the presentation of recognition certificates. These certificates mark the successful completion of the Schaeffer Fellows program and acknowledge Fellows' contributions to public service over the summer. Pictured above is 2025 Fellow Jerry Li (right) receiving his certificate of recognition from Leonard Schaeffer at USC.

## Inauguration of New Alumni

Fall Recognition marks the formal transition of Schaeffer Fellows from summer interns to program alumni. As new members of the growing alumni community, Fellows were encouraged to stay connected with program staff, participate in future alumni events, serve as alumni mentors, and continue public service throughout their careers. Pictured above, U.C. Berkeley Fellows receive alumni swag at the conclusion of Fall Recognition.

## Alumni & Mentor Participation

For local alumni, Fall Recognition offers a meaningful opportunity to connect with the newest cohort of Schaeffer Fellows, learn about their summer experiences, and share updates from their own academic and professional journeys. A defining strength of the program is its emphasis on peer-to-peer connection, and these events help deepen relationships across cohorts while reinforcing a shared commitment to public service.

As more alumni return to serve as mentors, Fall Recognition also provides an important space to recognize their continued involvement, support in-person connections with their mentees, and encourage their ongoing engagement as alumni. Pictured right is 2025 Fellow Alyssa Bui (left) with her mentor and 2022 Fellow, Eva Kretsinger-Walters, reconnecting during the recognition dinner hosted at the UVA Miller Center.



Fall Recognition at Harvard University



Kate Voltz (2024) presents at United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Schaeffer Fellow alumni take the lessons of their fellowship into careers spanning industries, continents, and causes. Their collective impact illustrates the power of early public service experience to shape leaders who innovate and elevate communities. This year, the alumni featured illustrate impact in:

- Nonprofit Organizations
- International Work
- Government
- Communications
- Professional Sports

## Alumni Stats

**467** Schaeffer Fellows supported from 2015-2025

**56** Alumni reported receiving competitive national & international fellowships

**34%** Alumni have pursued advanced degrees across disciplines, and half of these were in fields related to public policy or administration

## Shaping Stronger Communities Through Nonprofit Organizations

Schaeffer Fellow alumni extend their commitment to public service into the nonprofit sector, applying their skills and experiences to advance mission-driven work that strengthens communities and promotes equity. Many have built careers in areas such as sustainability, health, education, and civic engagement. Through program management, advocacy, research, and leadership, these alumni continue to drive meaningful impact and uphold the values of service cultivated during their fellowship summer.



**Lauren O'Neil** (2021) *Research and Operations Associate at NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund*

This year, O'Neil published *An Analysis of Student Involvement in Movements for Racial Justice from the 1960s to the Present*. In the brief, she "proposes a framework illustrating how students' involvement in protests and activism has effectively advanced racial justice and promoted social progress."

**Sethu Odayappan** (2021) *Co-Founder and Co-Director at Tree-Plenish*

Odayappan co-founded the nonprofit Tree-Plenish as a senior in high school, supporting student-led tree-planting initiatives in local communities. The organization now partners with over 500 schools and has facilitated the planting of more than 100,000 trees nationwide.

“ Our environmental justice initiative has a lot of potential to really give leadership opportunities to students who have historically not had them, [and] plant trees in communities that have historically not had trees.”



**Ashley Stagers** (2020) *Culture Reframed Youth Advisory Council*

Stagers partners with New York State and New York City legislators to strengthen support for youth transitioning out of foster care.

“ I love helping to create avenues for youth to get the answers they're looking for, to have somewhere to address their confusion, and to have the confidence and power to make their voices heard.”



## Schaeffer Fellow Alumni Abroad: Impact Around the World

Schaeffer Fellow alumni extend their commitment to public service beyond U.S. borders through international fellowships, advanced academic study and research, and global careers — applying their skills and experiences to address complex global issues. Their work spans fields including public health, diplomacy, education, and business, contributing to initiatives that strengthen communities and promote cross-cultural exchange.



**Sofia Greenwald (2023)**  
2024 Fulbright Binational Business Fellow in Mexico City

“ My time with the Fulbright Program fundamentally changed my life. It reshaped my career path from law and policy to social-impact entrepreneurship, and gave me the space to explore my identity as a Mexican-American while building a new life in Mexico. It allowed me to deepen my commitment to social impact through the lens of a country I've loved my entire life.”

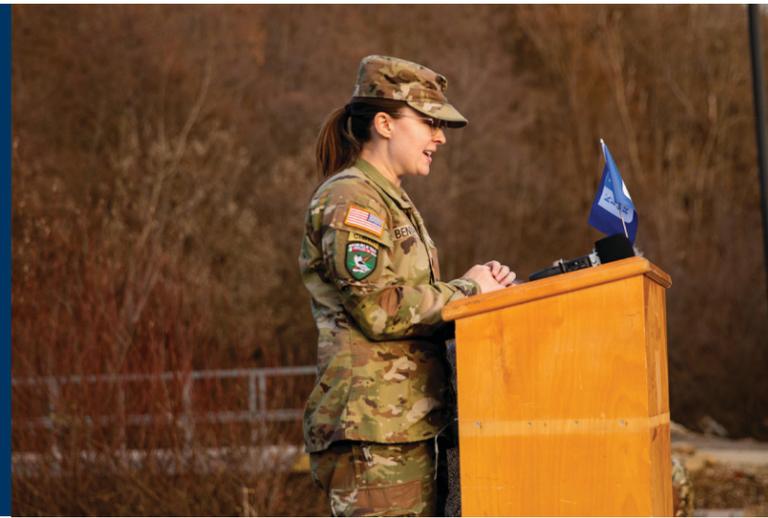
**Samantha Chacko (2022)**  
2024 Fulbright-Nehru Scholar

As a Fulbright Scholar, Samantha Chacko spent nine months at the National Law School of India University in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India conducting interviews with litigants, analyzing policy development, and comparing legal aid frameworks in the U.S., England, and India to identify gaps in women's access to justice. In May, Chacko presented her paper, "Equality in Access: Reviewing India's Legal Aid Framework," at a faculty seminar.



## Go Government: From Fellowship to Careers in Public Service

Schaeffer Fellow alumni continue to make an impact in local, state, and federal government long after their internship summer. Many have begun to build their careers in public service. Whether developing policy, managing programs, communicating with constituents, or leading new initiatives, Schaeffer Fellow alumni are helping to make government more responsive, inclusive, and effective.



**Paige Bentley (2018)**  
National Guard Logistics Officer

“ In July, I got home from an overseas deployment with the army. I was in Kosovo as part of the NATO Kosovo Forces mission. I served as the civil-military cooperation chief of regional command east. My job was to coordinate and execute projects and donations to Kosovar organizations to strengthen local capacity.”

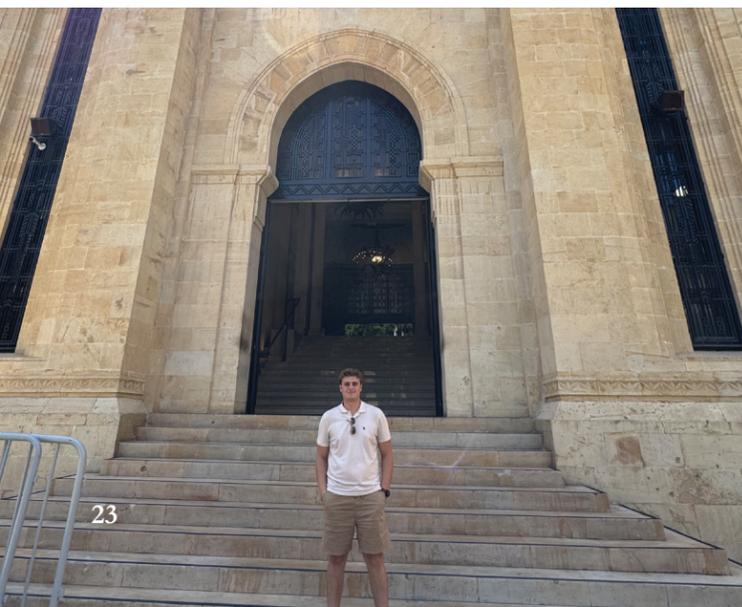
Bentley (left) speaks at a donation ceremony for a pedestrian bridge built over a river to allow children to walk to school.

**Thaddeus Whelan (2018)**  
Veteran, Project Management Analyst at the Federal Aviation Administration, & 2025 Mayoral Candidate for Seattle

“ My time working with NOAA and the FAA has been incredibly enlightening to the depths at which the government can provide aid and support to the people who need it the most. I likened my work in the federal government as my linchpin to understanding how to run [for mayor] and what to support. My time with deeply impressive federal workers made me understand that letting them have the opportunity to enact their ideas is one of the things I want to bring to people.”



Source:  
Thaddeus Whelan mayoral campaign website



**Karam Zein (2024)**  
Undergraduate Senior at University of Virginia

“ I had the privilege of conducting field research in Lebanon. My work focused on Lebanon's confessional political system and the ways in which its power-sharing structure shapes both governance and reform. Over several weeks, I interviewed current and former Members of Parliament, political figures connected by family legacy, academics, and everyday citizens representing all of Lebanon's major religious confessions.”

**Emilee LeVeque (2022)**  
Planning Assistant at Los Angeles Department of City Planning

LeVeque reviews legislation, projects, and plans to ensure they align with the department's Mobility Plan 2035 and provides recommendations on major city and Metro infrastructure efforts leading up to the 2028 LA Olympics.



**Elizabeth Esteban-Hernandez (2024)**, Cabinet Affairs Assistant at Office of California Governor

Esteban-Hernandez was a Schaeffer Fellow with Governor Newsom's office, and has returned full-time.

“ I have contributed to the Quarterly Objectives and Key Results Report, [collaborating] closely with agency heads throughout the process, and gaining insight into statewide coordination and executive governance.”



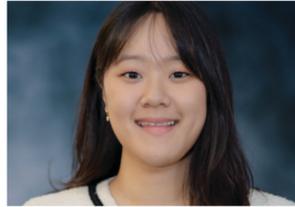
## Leading Through Research, Communication, & Storytelling

Schaeffer Fellow alumni are shaping how stories are told and information is shared across sectors. Many have built careers in communications, media, and writing, applying their public service experience to foster understanding, transparency, and engagement. From producing journalism to publishing books, these alumni demonstrate the power of storytelling in strengthening trust and community.

### Digital Media



**Amelia Montooth (2017)**  
CEO and Co-Founder at  
MutualsMedia



**Nancy Kim (2022)**  
Communications Coordinator  
for Student Affairs at Texas  
A&M University



**Katherine Dailey (2021)**  
Reporter at Michigan  
Advance



**William Swett (2021)**  
Reporter at The Times-  
Picayune | Nola.com

### Journalism

### Published Authors



**Chandra Ingram (2018)**  
Author of "Freedom Child"  
and "Freedom Lost"



**Jack Lohmann (2021)**  
Author of "White Light:  
The Elemental Role of  
Phosphorus - in Our Cells, in  
Our Food, and in Our World"

### Public Relations



**Stefanie Lao (2019)**  
Communications Counselor  
at Full Court Press  
Communications



**Nick Fiorillo (2017)**  
Senior Consultant at DB  
E.C.O. North America Inc.

## The Power of Sport to Inspire & Connect

Sport has the power to unite people across cultures and continents. Schaeffer Fellow alumni are helping showcase its spirit of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation.

By drawing on their public service experience, alumni are helping to ensure that their organizations leave a lasting positive impact on local communities and fans alike. Their work embodies the program's mission to develop leaders who bridge sectors and advance the public good, using sport as a dynamic platform to inspire civic engagement and strengthen community connection.



**Erin Barr (2018)**  
Senior Manager for  
Strategy and Planning  
Department at FIFA  
World Cup 2026



**Jalen Travis (2022)**  
Professional Football Player with Indianapolis Colts

Jalen Travis, a Truman Scholar and John Wooden Citizenship Cup recipient, graduated from Princeton in 2024. He went on to play football at Iowa State as a graduate transfer and was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts in the fourth round of the 2025 NFL Draft. During rookie mini camp, Jalen said this about his undergraduate government internship in the Senate:

“ Football is a microcosm of society in that you have guys from every corner of the country coming together to fight for the same goal. I think Capitol Hill is that...there are people you [disagree] with, but you know at the end of the day, you still want the same thing: making this country the best it can be.”

**Mia Speier (2020)**  
Senior Consultant of Digital Rights at Shared Planet

As a Senior Consultant on Digital Rights for Shared Planet, Speier drew from her research with Oxfam in Jordan on the risks and opportunities of AI in humanitarian and development work.

“ A lot of AI development and ideation starts in Western countries and a lot of the people that work on these products are either not from or do not have local context or knowledge of the language. We need to consider the impact of taking new and emerging technologies and applying them to different [contexts].”



Speier (left) engaged in discussion on how AI can support peace while safeguarding human dignity at Globethics Geneva Peace Week

**Felix Bulwa (2021)**  
State and Local Affairs  
Associate at LA28 Olympic  
& Paralympic Games

“ I'm immensely excited to be part of the surreal task of bringing the LA28 Olympic & Paralympic Games to my hometown of Los Angeles. Working with local and state public sector entities to put on the biggest sporting event of all time is a special opportunity.”



**Nivea Krishnan (2024)**  
Program Coordinator for  
Civics Matter at Arizona  
Cardinals

“ After working in nonprofits and local government, I'm thrilled to continue serving my home state with an organization steadfastly committed to youth engagement, empowerment, and civic participation.”





Alumni with Mr. Schaeffer at Schaeffer Fellows Summit



Staff greet alumni Shir Attias (2019) and Joe Jocas (2022) at USC Capital Campus reception in October

# ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Alumni engagement remains a cornerstone of the Schaeffer Fellows program, providing valuable opportunities for networking, mentorship, and professional development. Through a mix of formal programming and informal gatherings, alumni and current Fellows build lasting professional connections within a growing and engaged alumni community.

## Guest Hosts for Virtual Forums

The new virtual Fellows Forums offered additional opportunities to explore professional development topics, including internship preparedness and networking skills. Pictured below are program staff, joined by Katherine Dailey (2021), while hosting a Forum on personal branding where 2025 Fellows, including Harper Tran (UVA) and Lawson Wright (Princeton), were invited to practice their elevator pitches.

## Networking at the Annual Summit

Each year, Fellows look forward to the opportunity to connect in person with program alumni during the annual Summit in Washington, DC. In addition to serving in formal speaking roles, alumni are invited to participate in Summit social events. Pictured above and below are local alumni in attendance at the Summit keynote dinner held at the National Press Club.

## Social Gatherings

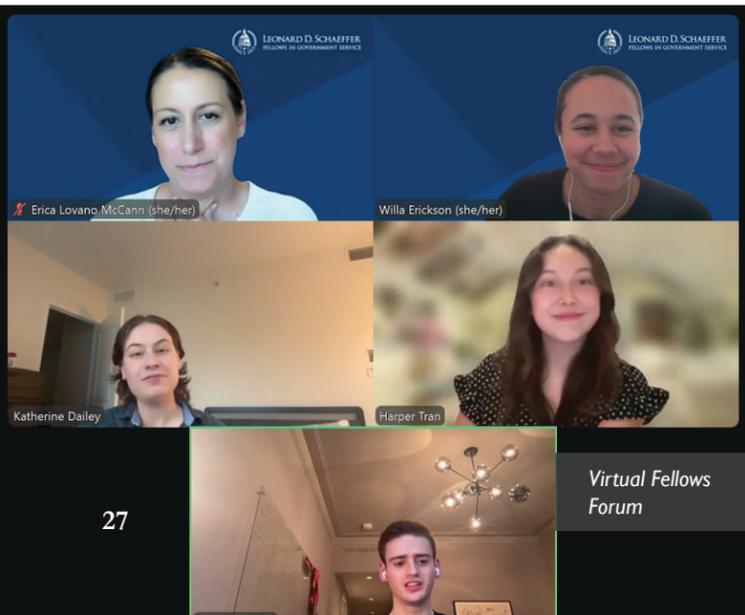
Alumni connected with each other at events at the USC Capital Campus in Washington, DC, and participated in local informal social gatherings. They also facilitated discussions and met individually with current Fellows, sharing insights from both their government internships and broader fellowship experiences.

## Schaeffer Institute Involvement

The launch of the USC Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy & Government Service has opened new pathways for alumni to engage with policy researchers across its flagship programs, including at the annual summer social and a fall Town Hall where alumni presented about the scope and impact of their internship projects.



Alumni gathering with program staff in Washington, DC



Virtual Fellows Forum



Skylar Jackman (2021), right, mingles with 2025 Fellows at the National Press Club



Schaeffer Institute annual summer social



Schaeffer Institute Town Hall in November

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Over the past year, Schaeffer Fellows program staff have made steady progress on the strategic priorities set by the Advisory Board in 2024. Looking ahead, priorities center on expanding relationships and opportunities for both current Fellows and a growing alumni community.

## Strengthen Alumni Engagement

This year, alumni connected through regional gatherings and virtually with the launch of the Schaeffer Fellows Network mobile app. A redesigned alumni survey highlighted their interest in professional development and peer networking opportunities. In response, the program will establish an Alumni Council and pilot career-stage-specific workshops.

## Enhance Professional Development

Weekly virtual Fellows Forums provided structured reflection, skill-building, and discussion of internship experiences. These interactive sessions, covering topics such as applying to competitive fellowships and navigating the workplace, encouraged active participation and relationship-building. The forums will continue next summer and expand to alumni, emphasizing mentorship, networking, and early career guidance.

## Expand Partnerships & Networks

The program advanced relationships with mission-aligned organizations, creating new opportunities for collaborative programming. Next year, a Summit social with partners such as Democracy House, the Volcker Alliance and the Bipartisan Policy Center will facilitate cross-program networking among Fellows, alumni, and external partners.

## Focus on Evidence-Based Policy Solutions

Fellows' interest in applied policy research prompted expanded engagement with the USC Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy & Government, RAND Corporation and Brookings Institution. Growing these partnerships will provide Fellows with additional access to expert researchers, workshops, and applied learning to deepen their understanding of evidence-based policymaking.

2025 Fellows arrive at the National Press Club in Washington, DC



Program staff and alumni at the Schaeffer Institute opening in April 2025 in Washington, DC





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