

Internships and Graduate Assistantships

The University of Illinois at Springfield is a place for students to gain hands-on experience in state government operations. Assistantships and internships offered in conjunction with a graduate degree provide opportunities to work with the people and issues shaping Illinois public policy. Each year over 110 interns and graduate assistants—seeking academic degrees in areas including communications, political studies, business, environmental studies, and many more—work in Institute for Public Affairs-sponsored programs and activities.

Graduate Public Service Internships

The **Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) Program** is a 21-month program that places approximately 45 to 50 interns in governmental agencies each year. This premier internship program, administered by the Institute for Public Affairs' GPSI Unit under the direction of Nancy Ayers, provides the state of Illinois with top-quality graduates from all academic disciplines who otherwise might not have entered professional public service careers.

Interns begin a professional career with state government and simultaneously earn a master's degree. They gain valuable work experience and insight into the operations of Illinois government and receive a monthly stipend, tuition, and a modest travel allotment.



Illinois Congressman Ray LaHood talks to GPSI program interns during their orientation.

Legislative Staff Internships

The **Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program (ILSIP)**, directed by Kent Redfield of the Illinois Legislative Studies Center, recruits outstanding graduate students from across the nation and provides them with an opportunity to serve with the Illinois General Assembly leadership staffs, nonpartisan research agency staffs, or private-sector businesses that work closely with the legislature.

The internship is a work experience program that benefits individuals with a wide range of interests. It has been especially beneficial to those pursuing public- or private-sector careers related to government. Past interns include Governor Jim Edgar, Auditor General William Holland, U.S. congressmen, state legislators, lobbyists, and numerous Illinois General Assembly staff and personnel.

ILSIPs come in three varieties:

- **The Illinois General Assembly's Legislative Staff Intern Program.** This program assigns full-time interns to one of the four partisan staffs of the Illinois General Assembly or to the staff of the Legislative Research Unit (LRU). Interns draft legislation, research issues, review state appropriations, and work with legislators and legislative staff as they gain direct hands-on experience in the legislative process. The program serves 20 interns annually, with partisan staff interns working from October 1 to August 15 and LRU interns working from September 15 to August 1. The interns receive eight hours of graduate credit. For fiscal year 1998, interns earned \$1,600 a month.
- **The Zeke Giorgi Memorial Internship.** This program is similar to the ILSIP. It provides for the orientation and education of two to four interns assigned to work with the four partisan legislative staffs for a term of 10 1/2 months from October 1 to August 15.
- **Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program/Private-Sector Internships.** These internships place post-undergraduate students in private-sector organizations that work with the General Assembly. The program provides interns with an experience similar to that of the ILSIP legislative staff interns.

Graduate Assistantships

Two-year graduate assistantship opportunities provide educational experience related to graduate students' areas of study. Typically, 16 to 20 graduate students in a variety of academic disciplines work for the units of the Institute for Public Affairs. Their assignments include publishing; marketing; television production; and survey, legal, policy, and legislative research and analysis. Graduate assistants receive tuition and a stipend.

GPSI Profile: Naomi Greene

Naomi Greene knew she had a good opportunity right where she was. She already had a college degree and some professional work experience, but her internship at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency re-energized her and gave her time to explore new career opportunities.

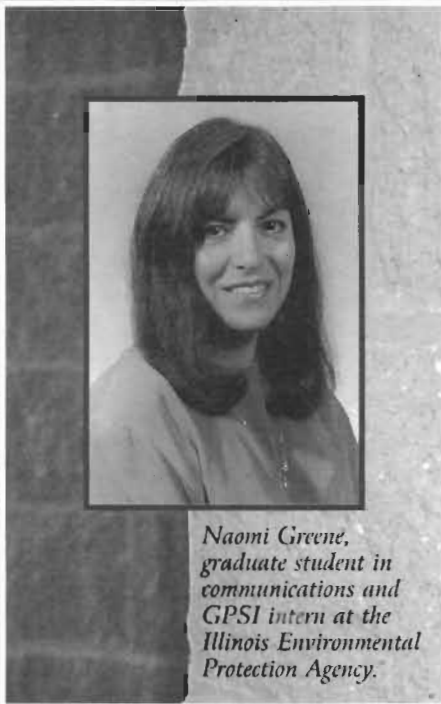
For the 1997-1998 academic year, Greene served her Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) in the Office of Public Information at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). Working in a "small but complete" production studio at IEPA's Springfield headquarters, her main duty was to produce a bimonthly program called *Our Environment Today*, which cable television companies show throughout the state. The informational program features agency experts and others in Illinois who explain different environmental issues.

Her favorite episode was one called *Clearing the Air on Alternative Fuels*. She produced this one at the request of the Bureau of Air, which wants people to know that some Illinoisans are already using alternative fuels — such as ethanol, propane, biodiesel, and electricity — instead of gasoline.

Greene also wrote copy for a newsletter, *Green Talk*, published twice a year by the IEPA and distributed to high school teachers and students. She traveled frequently, and handled some still photography duties when the agency's main photographer was not available. Another part of her internship included guiding a Mexican delegation on a tour of the state. Greene speaks fluent Spanish.

A journalism graduate of Louisiana State University, Greene said she came to Springfield because of her husband's job. She says her internship has been great and provided steady employment in her field while studying for her master's degree in communications. So, her GPSI assignment was a perfect fit for her.

After earning her master's, Greene says she will probably look for work in community relations or public relations.



Naomi Greene, graduate student in communications and GPSI intern at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Photo by Bob Wiatrowski, IEPA agency photographer