

Ainsley Buck
2020 Reflection Blog

My work on the Bass Connections North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan has truly ignited my interest in Child Policy. My broad research interest is in the intersection of brain and behavior, including both neurodevelopmental and social-emotional developmental aspects. I previously saw this science as a siloed discipline, and my experience at Margolis has exemplified how all research must take into consideration the environment that it will be implemented in. While I had little previous experience in policy work, this internship has afforded me the opportunity to see how policy not only intersects with, but is crucial to, the impact my current and future research can have.

As an undergraduate student, the majority of my learning experiences are in the traditional classroom setting and often can be replicated by a textbook. This internship has been an entirely different type of learning experience in that my takeaways are driven by my own work, rather than absorbing facts from readings and lectures. I think it is an incredibly unique experience to be able to make a real-world impact this early on in my academic career, and one that I would not have come across without the mentorship of my Margolis faculty and team leads.

My experience with group work coming into my time at Duke was mostly negative. I think many people may relate to these not-so-fond memories of group projects in high school where one team member primarily took the reins, or all of the work was left on your shoulders. My experience with teamwork at Duke, and specifically in my time at Margolis with my Bass Connections team, has completely changed how I view group work. I have had such a positive experience collaborating with my fellow interns and other team members. I have come to both appreciate and crave group interaction to form more thorough thoughts and perspectives on whatever topic is at the forefront of discussion. Additionally, both Bass Connections and this summer internship at the Margolis Center have allowed me to collaborate with people all across the academic spectrum. This has allowed me to connect with others with similar interests that I would likely not have crossed paths with, and these people have quickly become important mentors as I move forward in my academic pursuits.

I think this internship did an incredible job in the face of COVID-19 and all of the unexpected obstacles. Personally, I think Margolis was the optimal place to be during all of this: it has been decidedly impressive watching the center navigate the pandemic, and I'm so proud to have had part in an institute that is making so many positive waves in health policy during this time.