

The first time I considered applying to the Margolis Internship Program was during my first year at Duke — I had always been interested in improving community health, but health policy was brand new territory for me. One year and a pandemic later, I joined the Margolis Center full of questions about how to make healthcare more equitable and accessible, and eager to learn about how policy could change that.

This summer, I was part of a project team that is currently researching disparities in telehealth access for Medicaid beneficiaries with funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. Early in the internship, the team delegated tasks for each aspect of the project, with my primary activities being identifying stakeholders and developing a literature review. I also identified my topic of interest - musculoskeletal health. Having set goals to work towards throughout the summer along with weekly check-ins made it easier to understand what was expected of me and produce work that I am proud of. Additionally, throughout the summer I remained connected with other Margolis researchers that worked on healthcare transformation and payment reform, and their work really helped my own. I also connected with a musculoskeletal health expert, which allowed me to put the literature into real-world perspective, and identified other potential contacts who can provide insight on how care delivery is evolving.

One aspect of the internship that differed from other learning experiences I've had in the past was the health equity-focused journal club. Our cohort read *Medical Apartheid* by Harriet A. Washington prior to the start of the program, and this shaped how I viewed equity in my work and the rest of the journal club sessions. Hearing from experts from a variety of backgrounds enhanced my understanding of social determinants of health and health equity concepts. I was also able to apply these skills, along with a few other interns, in revising a toolkit meant to support researchers in applying principles of diversity, equity and inclusion to their research. Aside from developing a more robust skillset, having common concepts to discuss with the other interns was really beneficial, as I was able to share lessons learned from my research and hear about their work. The most important takeaway from these activities and discussions was that we need to clearly define what equity and inclusion looks like before setting about trying to achieve it.

At times, my work challenged my initial perception of how to approach certain activities, but it also allowed me to develop new skills. Through the internship, I learned how to complete an IRB protocol application and how to communicate research findings to state agencies like NC Medicaid. The skills labs taught me how to best present myself and my work, and what experience is necessary to move up in the world of health policy.

Overall, the Margolis internship program allowed me to gain a greater awareness of how interconnected health policy is and how I could potentially contribute in the future.