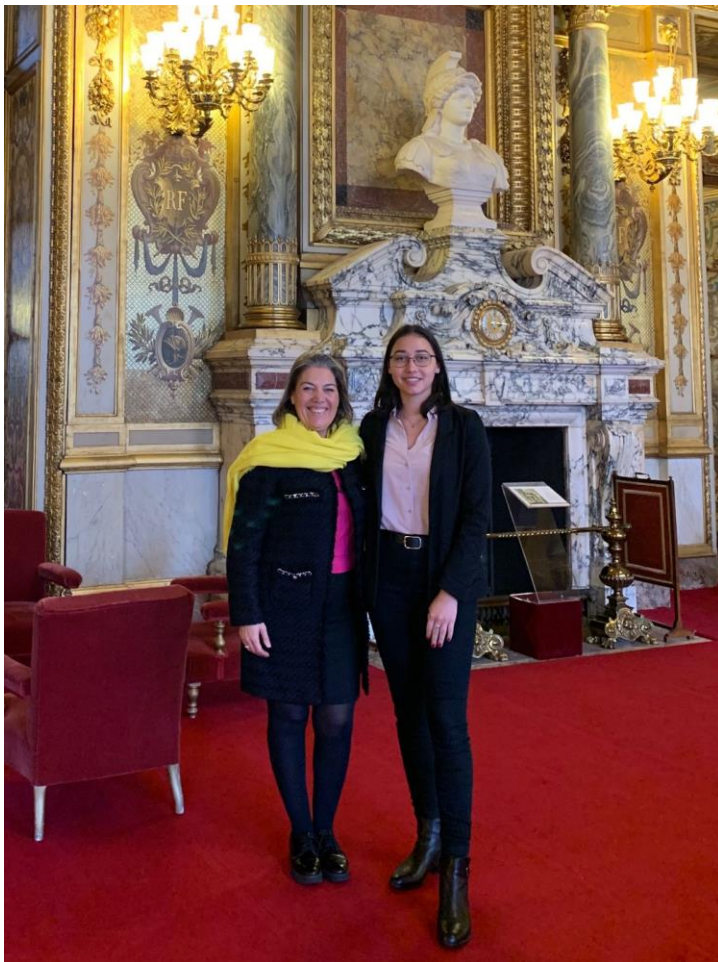


The French-American Fund Fellowship: A Behind-the-Scenes Experience at French Senate

While in High School, I loved filling my schedule with classes of all sorts: History, French, Economics, Web Design, whatever the subject was, I was interested in learning more. So, when it came to deciding on what I wanted to major in for college, I was stuck. How could I choose just one? After doing more research, the French Literature and Francophone studies degree tied together all the subjects I loved most, so I went for it.

Fast-forward to 2019, after four great years at Cal State Long Beach where I not only improved my French, but also learned new subjects and studied abroad at the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris for a year. I was in my last year and hit with the question, what do I choose next? And thanks to one of my professors Dr. Nayak, a great opportunity fell into my lap: The French American Fund. Offering students the chance to have an immersive, behind-the-scenes experience at the French Senate in Paris, the French American Fund is an incredible program that I knew I could not let pass me by. I quickly applied and fortunately got accepted along with receiving the honorable Nohemi Gonzalez scholarship. And just like that, I was onto my next adventure!



As soon as I arrived in Paris, I was accompanied by Eva Allouche, the President and Founder of the French American Fund. I was housed at Cité Universitaire, Fondation des États Unis, a beautiful campus-like space filled with student life and events, and I even had a view of the Eiffel Tower from my window! After a week of settling in, I made my first trip over to the Senate to meet with Senator of Calvados, Sonia de la Provôté and her collaborator Chloé Tence, with whom I would spend my internship. As soon as I met them, I immediately felt welcomed into their team, and was excited to join such a powerful team of women.

The Senator integrated me into her daily routine as much as she could, allowing me to participate and hold conversations in important meetings with other senators, mayors, architects and more. Being able to see at first hand the current events and how the legislative system works in France, being surrounded by the people and conversations that drive the decisions of the country was extraordinary. Also, hard to describe how amazing it was working in the Luxembourg Palace every day and passing by

Napoleon's throne to go watch the senators discuss current issues and solutions for France.

Throughout the semester, I helped the Senator and her collaborator research the success of previous cultural budgets and finding solutions on how to make historic buildings and museums more interesting for the younger generation. I also sat in on meetings with the State's architectural council, DRAC, the Heritage Foundation and more to find out how to better organize the reconstruction of historic buildings, prioritize them in the lives of the inhabitants, and improve communication between regions, mayors, and architects.

It did not stop there, the program also allowed me to take Master classes at the Sorbonne Panthéon, where I studied Political Science of the European Union. These studies fit perfectly with my internship and allowed me to really grasp all sides of the French government, nationally and internationally. It was extremely unique to compare how the French system works in comparison to the United States, and how many ways we can solve issues, build structure, and laws.

Along with the amazing experience of interning at the Senate and studying at the Sorbonne, the French American Fund also set up excursions all throughout the semester. This allowed me and the other TFAF intern from the US, Kathy Bradshaw, explore Normandy and Orleans, as well as specific areas in Paris like the Quai D'Orsay French Ministry of Foreign affairs, the Spy Exposition at the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie, the Shangri-la hotel and more.

While in Normandy, I had the pleasure of meeting the Mayor, Joël Bruneau, and visiting the historical sites of World War II. I visited the D-Day landing beaches, the memorial museum, and the Normandy American Cemetery. Visiting these sites in person really evoked the importance of protecting these historic buildings and sites. It was a very moving experience and helped motivate me even more in contributing all I could during my internship to help preserve this important history.



I also visited Orleans, the city that Joan of Arc famously saved from the British in 1429. And thanks to Mr. Davy Masson, director of Tourisme Loiret and partner of the French American Fund, we were able to explore the city and tour its beautiful museums, town center, and even their Christmas market, since it was around Christmas-time that we went.

To celebrate the end of the internship, The French American Fund held a Gala at the US Embassy. This evening I had the pleasure of meeting even more extremely important partners of the program, French ministers, known journalists and lawyers and so on. It was a wonderful night full of making new connections and celebrating the end of an incredible few months. I cannot put into words all the things I have learned from this program, but I can say that I wish only the best for it and that more and more students can benefit from this one-in-a-lifetime experience.



I will forever be grateful for Eva Allouche for having organized this program and for her support, as well as for Senator Sonia de la Provôté and her collaborator Chloé Tencé for having integrated me into the world of legislative work on culture and heritage in France. And of course, Dr. Nayak for having guided me to this program!