

When I was seventeen, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. I had never previously been invested in politics. But according to my AP United States History teacher, regardless of whoever won the 2016 election, it was going to be historic and to change the political climate drastically. Not only was Trump's election creating a shift in the politics of the United States, but it was slowly beginning to morph me into the politically engaged individual I am today. I found myself paying attention to headlines more frequently, instead of regarding the news as background noise from my mother in the evenings while I worked on homework in the next room. I was learning more about the United States and our domestic and foreign policies both in and out of my classrooms. For the first time in my life, I began to realize that decisions politicians were making affected my future.

I've loved writing my whole life. I attempted to write many novels in elementary school, even if I was basically plagiarizing the young adult books I read (that were way beyond my age.) In high school, I began to connect my love of writing with a possible career path. I landed on journalism, even though I barely knew what the career entailed.

As I became more passionate about politics after Trump's election and my love of writing grew, I was practically positive I was selecting the correct major, even before I moved into my cramped dorm room in Pollock Halls.

I want to write for the American people. I want to be a journalist who informs the public and leads them to making rational, informed decisions for themselves, rather than just listening to what their favorite television personality tells them what to believe. I want to shape the way our country thinks about politics and the people involved in it through my writing. Thus, I

believe the Stanley E. Degler Washington Program is a perfect fit for me to advance my career in the exact direction I want to.

My objectives in applying for this program is to gain valuable experience in the city I want to be in after graduation with an internship in a career I am aiming for. Washington, D.C. is full of vibrancy, energy, and history, and I yearn to be immersed in the city. As an aspiring political journalist, D.C. is the ideal place for me. Moreover, as a history buff, I find being in D.C. to be completely inspiring. I admire the founders of our country for creating a nation, essentially from scratch, that has grown to be one of the most powerful on the world stage. Being in the city that honors great leaders from our country's past only reminds me that I am part of the future's history, and I have the opportunity and the ability to help push our country forward.

My main goal after graduation is to cover politics for a news organization. Washington, D.C. is the only place where I am surrounded by legislation being creating and battles for the rights of the people of our country being actively fought. I hope to inspire younger generations to become more politically engaged through my journalism, like other D.C. based journalists have inspired me. In this industry, I am constantly told that the main way to turn my aspirations into reality is to gain as much experience as possible. I can complete internships in State College, or in my hometown of Pittsburgh, but interning in D.C. will hopefully point me directly to a post-graduation career covering politics in Washington.

As a participant in the Washington, D.C. program, I hope to gain experience in professional political journalism, learn to live independently in a city, and to grow as a young adult. Working at a news organization in D.C. will be high energy and exciting. I want to be part of the hustle of constant information pouring into the newsroom. Additionally, I still think it is

essential to ensure that living in D.C. and covering politics is what I want to do before I commit to a career and move after graduation.

Also, I believe living in State College independently is completely different than living in a city. Though I've experienced a great amount of personal growth through living without my parents for the first time at Penn State, I think living in a city like D.C. is exactly what I need to continue developing as an adult.

Furthermore, I think I would be an asset to the program through my writing experience on campus. At the time of this application, I am in my second semester of writing for *The Daily Collegian*, and my first semester writing for *Her Campus*. I am currently a senior Performing Arts reporter for the *Collegian*, and I submit between two and three articles a week. This position has led me to become experienced and comfortable with interviewing the public and morphing their words into a piece. I have already gotten incredible opportunities to cover events like the Jonas Brothers concert and the Book of Mormon national tour. Though the writing I currently do for the *Collegian* is different from the political coverage I've referenced throughout this essay, the *Collegian* has offered me a fantastic outlet to learn news writing. Thus far in my college career, I have learned more about journalism through my experience at the *Collegian* than in any class. I have been taught the value of hands-on experience in this profession, which has strengthened my desire to be part of the D.C. program to fully immerse myself in the career I want and city I want to be in.

Finally, though I have mentioned this frequently, I would ideally like to intern for a news organization and primarily focus on learning about covering politics. Additionally, my

experience as the performing arts reporter for the Collegian has also sparked my interest in working for a company focused on the arts.

Overall, I am ecstatic at the mere possibility of living and working in Washington, D.C. during Fall 2020. I am driven to help impact others and our political world through my writing, and this opportunity is exactly what I think I need to lead myself in the direction of my goals.

Writing Samples
(samples from my work at the Collegian)

Center for the Performing Arts Season Preview:

This fall and spring, the Center for the Performing Arts will seek to capture a vivid vision of living in the United States through various African American perspectives with a series of music, dance, and theatrical performances. After curating a season of events, the center realized the commonalities between the artists and used the opportunity to utilize these performances to highlight the lesser-told stories of black americans. “The American Experience: Through an African American Lens” will run throughout the 2019-2020 semesters.

“We have always placed an emphasis on perspectives and views that perhaps, but this isn’t universally true of course, some Penn State students might not have ever had any exposure to or known about,” Amy Dupain Vashaw, the director of audience and program development for the Center for the Performing Arts, said.

Vashaw also said the theme is essential to building empathy and creating representation at Penn State. Throughout the year, eight different performances will highlight different artists and their perspectives on the theme of the African American experience.

“Each of the stories are very powerful and slightly different, just like the African American experience is in this country,” said Vashaw.

The series will open with Imani Winds and Catalyst Quartet on Sept. 18, which will feature a new piece of work titled “(im)migration: music of change.” On Sept. 26, Maceo Parker and the Maceo Parker Big Band will bring funk to State College.

“[Maceo Parker] played with James Brown, the P-Funk Allstars, and George Clinton. He’s kind of been all over and is super funky. Hearing the history of funk through his lens is important,” Vashaw said.

The 100th anniversary of the Harlem Renaissance will be celebrated through choreography to Langston Hughes poetry. Mwenso and the Shakes with Brianna Thomas, Michela Marino Lerman and Vuyo Sotashe will take the stage on Oct. 22 for an event titled “Harlem 100: Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Harlem Renaissance.”

This spring, Step Afrika!, a highly ranked and the first professional step dancing company, is premiering the show “Drumfolk,” which is based on an 18th century conflict between slave owners and slaves .

“The slave owners felt the slaves were gained too much power. They knew how to read and write and they had drums through which they had developed a method of communication. So, there was an uprising and a new act was put into place where all of the slaves’ writing and drums were taken away,” Vashaw said.

The act led the slaves to adopt a body language for communication, and “Drumfolk,” will explore this story.

The series will also present the Dance Theater of Harlem 50th Anniversary Tour, Lizz Wright, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis in “Masters of Form: From Mingus to Monk,” and “The Color Purple.”

“[The Color Purple] is my favorite musical of all time. It’s very devastating, but also uplifting. What a way to end this series, because it really is a quintessential story of African American life in this country,” Vashaw said.

George Trudeau, the director of the Center for the Performing Arts, said he hopes the series helps students and members of the community to reach a more complete understanding of the lives’ of others. Artists will also be available to engage with audiences to continue the conversations started through the performances.

“I think in general we believe at the Center that it is part of our mission to provide opportunities to learn and understand each other through the work of artists,” Trudeau said.

Moreover, Trudeau said he would like students to attend as many events as possible to see a diverse version of the African-American Experience.

“I would like students to know that a quarter to a third of our audiences are Penn State students. I think sometimes they imagine there might not be many students there. We are very welcoming to students,” Trudeau said.

Students active in the Penn State performing arts scene like, Dylan Winick, are eager to see what the series brings to campus.

“Anything that can help educate people about other people’s perspectives makes Penn State a better place for everyone,” Winick (junior-security and risk analysis) said.

Comedian (Joel McHale) Event Coverage

Though a laugh track played for an unknown reason before the show began, it was not necessary as comedian Joel McHale left the audience in hysterics. The Student Programming Association brought McHale at 8 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 30 at the Eisenhower Auditorium.

Nikki Halloran, the director of events for SPA, said events are coordinated in an attempt to bring in diverse performers to cater to as many students' tastes as possible.

"We spent a lot of time watching videos and interviews to find who was doing things that were relevant now," Halloran (senior-telecommunications) said.

McHale brought raunchy comedy to Penn State as SPA's first event of the year. Students who attended the show, like Rachel Lutz and Ceci Bucci, expected McHale to feature sarcastic comedy, and he seemed to not disappoint.

"I don't know what to expect. I don't know what his stand-up style is, but it will probably be something snarky," Bucci (junior-statistics) said before the show.

Lutz (junior-chemical engineering) and Bucci were familiar with McHale's work on "The Soup" and "Community," but not his stand-up.

Executive director of SPA, Jake Coyne, hoped students enjoyed the show and McHale's humor.

"I love comedy shows, of course, and I hope we do really well with this show," Coyne (junior-business management) said.

Last appearing at Penn State with The Impractical Jokers, comedian J.F. Harris opened for McHale. After confirming while on stage that he was allowed to curse, Harris shaped his routine to his younger audiences when he realized they seemed to prefer the more offensive jokes, while still offering some political commentary. Harris advised students to finish college, so they would not have to select the "some college" option while applying for jobs.

Harris, a self-proclaimed feminist, made an argument for the legalization of marijuana as he said the only way marijuana is a gateway drug is that it is a "gateway to better music."

After Harris's short set, McHale entered the stage and immediately began bashing Ohio State in attempts to get the audience on his side from the beginning. Well-versed in Penn State trivia,

McHale explained the origins of the Nittany Lion as Penn State's mascot as well as how the Eisenhower auditorium is not named after former President Dwight Eisenhower.

McHale poked fun at Pennsylvania, observing that everything between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia seems to be Amish country. He followed his Pennsylvania commentary with deciding to try the "We Are" chant.

"[You guys are] the politest people on the planet," Mchale said after the audience gave him the "you're welcome" at the end of the chant.

Later, Mchale attempted a "We Are" chant at an extremely fast speed and said that students should use that version more frequently.

McHale also found humor in the strong role football plays throughout State College. While googling State College, presumably to do his research on the Nittany Lion, the majority of the results and new stories centered around football.

In between showing off his extensive knowledge of Penn State, Mchale also offered crude humor and political jokes. Mchale admitted his fascination with how Donald Trump's tie stays secure and his fear of Mike Pence.

SPA will continue to host events like this throughout the year. Information for future events can be found SPA's Instagram and Twitter accounts, both @psuspa.