

# Career Advancement DC Survival Guide: How to Get On Track as a Summer Intern in Washington, DC

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## D.C. Housing Overview

Welcome to the nation's Capital! It comes as no surprise that Washington D.C. has a lot to offer when it comes to the arts, culture, and history of the nation. This city also offers a variety of opportunities for UChicago students who are seeking internships and full-time jobs.

The type of housing you're looking for, your budget, and your connections in D.C. are all factors that should help determine where you begin your housing search. The earlier you begin looking, the more options you will have and the easier it will be to choose exactly where you want to live for the summer. In the end, it is best to find housing that is near your job location with easy access to public transportation. This should be a priority when looking for housing; it will make your commute to and from work much easier and it will save you a lot of time and money.

## Finding Summer Housing

Here is a list of steps you should take when looking for housing:

1. *Utilize the UChicago Network through technology and social media platforms.* Several students from past internships have found temporary housing by posting to UChicago Facebook groups and LinkedIn inquiring about a housing vacancy. Connect with other UChicago students by visiting Career Advancement's Facebook page or the UChicago Class Facebook pages.
2. *Consider finding a roommate.* Apartments can be expensive and you may end up spending a good amount of your summer income paying for rent. If you can find a classmate, friend, or relative who is willing to room with you or put you up for the summer, economically, this could be your best option.
3. *Location is everything.* It is vital that your housing situation is near your work and/or near transportation that will get you to work quickly.

4. *Decide what is important to you.* Once you've decided on what neighborhoods would be convenient for you, it's always helpful to explore what attractions they have to offer. Whether you love trying new restaurants, shopping, or visiting museums and other cultural institutions, try to find a place that will give you the most time to explore your favorite things.
5. *Politely ask your employer about housing resources.* Your employer may have suggestions for where to live, or give you the contact information of other interns who will be also on a housing search so that you can room together or get advice from each other.

## Online Housing Resources

There are a variety of online housing resources that provide short-term housing vacancies, including:

<https://washingtondc.craigslist.org/search/hhh>  
<https://www.airbnb.com/s/Washington--DC>  
<http://www.apartments.com>  
<https://www.hotpads.com/>  
<http://www.hiwashingtondc.org/> (Washington International Youth Hostel)

## Student Housing Organizations

Student Housing Organizations are corporations that own large residential buildings and rent out rooms to students in the summer. Sometimes the buildings are set up like dormitories with single rooms and collective bathrooms, and other times the rooms are more like studio or one-bedroom apartments. It is important to look and apply for housing as soon as possible. Many of the applications for the following housing options come out in January or February and housing can fill up quickly. There are both pros and cons to living in Student Housing, just as there are positives and negatives to living in a dorm.

### Pros

- Amenities such as security, maintenance, etc.
- Opportunity to meet other students living in the same building



- Often much more affordable than finding a private apartment: prices typically range from \$2,000 - \$4,000 for the entire summer

#### *Cons*

- There is a possibility that you'll be matched with a roommate
- There are rules and regulations in most of these places that you'll have to abide by

#### **These institutions offer summer housing:**

##### **Catholic University of America:**

<http://www.conferences.cua.edu/summer>

The Catholic University of America (CUA) provides summer housing to individuals who are in Washington, D.C. for educational purposes, internships, co-ops, research, and educational study. Catholic University is located in Northeast Washington, D.C. on a tree-lined 193-acre campus, approximately three miles north of the U.S. Capitol. Email: [cua-conferences@cua.edu](mailto:cua-conferences@cua.edu)

##### **George Washington University:**

<http://www.summerhousing.gwu.edu/>

Located in the heart of the Foggy Bottom district of Washington, D.C., GWU is minutes away from Dupont Circle, Georgetown, and other downtown areas. You will find a "neighborhood life" like nowhere else! The mix of shopping, dining, entertainment, and nightlife within a mile radius adds to the experience of staying in the Foggy Bottom area. The residence halls are also within close walking distance of the Kennedy Center, the State Department, and the National Mall, all of which contribute to the GWU summer experience.

Email: [sumhouse@gwu.edu](mailto:sumhouse@gwu.edu)

##### **International Student House of Washington, D.C.:**

<http://www.ishdc.org>

The International Student House is a residence and program center for students, interns, trainees, or visiting scholars committed to promoting the mission of tolerance, respect and friendship among individuals from around the world. Email: [info@ishdc.org](mailto:info@ishdc.org)

##### **Washington Intern Student Housing:**

[www.internsdc.com](http://www.internsdc.com)

WISH provides fully furnished intern townhouses and apartments in the historic Capitol Hill neighborhood, near all the government buildings, museums, shops, restaurants, theaters, and easy Metro access. WISH hosts students from across the country and around the world, and claims to be "the community behind the internship." You'll stay with other interns who are studying and working in Washington, exploring the Nation's Capital, and furthering their careers.

Applications are available online. Email: [interns@internsdc.com](mailto:interns@internsdc.com)

##### **American University:**

[www.american.edu/ocl/housing/ucgs/](http://www.american.edu/ocl/housing/ucgs/)

The university is located in the northwest corner of Washington D.C. and offers housing options to interns over the summer. AU has dormitories, as well as apartments available to rent. Applications and rates are available online. Email: [housinganddiningprograms@american.edu](mailto:housinganddiningprograms@american.edu)

##### **D.C. Neighborhoods**

Here is a list of neighborhoods that past interns have suggested for housing options:

**Alexandria, VA** is about six miles downriver from the city and is located on the Western bank of the Potomac River. The historic center is known as Old Town, and it contains much of the city's nightlife. Old Town is easily accessible off the Yellow and Blue Metrorail lines.

**Adams Morgan** is the center of D.C.'s liveliest nightlife. This multicultural neighborhood is at the intersection of 18th Street and Columbia Road and is packed with restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques and bookstores. There are a number of moderately priced apartments and group living situations. The demand for housing is very high and affordable locations are hard to find.

**Capitol Hill** houses the Capitol, Supreme Court, House, Senate and Congressional buildings. This historic residential neighborhood, which stretches from Eastern Market to Union Station, is popular with young professionals and Capitol Hill staff. It is also the densest with about 35,000 people living in just under two square miles. Area housing options include 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> century row houses, modern condominiums, and older apartment buildings.

**DuPont Circle** is considered the most cosmopolitan neighborhood in D.C. and is in the northwest quadrant of the city. It is home to Johns Hopkins University, and many think tanks. This neighborhood is an extremely popular area for young professionals and has many art galleries, restaurants, and bookshops. Housing options include group houses, basement apartments, and apartment buildings.

**Foggy Bottom** is located along the Potomac riverfront and is home to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, George Washington University, the State Department, the Department of the Interior, and the National Academy of Sciences. The neighborhood, located between the White House and Georgetown, is a mixture of residences, office buildings, restaurants, and hotels.



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**Penn Quarter (Old Downtown)** is located south of Chinatown. The historic buildings and streetscapes have been revitalized and the neighborhood has become the latest hot spot for arts, sports, and entertainment. There are new condo developments in the area, so the prices are more expensive.

**Silver Spring, MD** is located just north of D.C. It hosts several musical and ethnic festivals as well as the American Film Institute's Silver Theater and Cultural Center, which shows both classic and independent movies. Silver Spring is easily accessible by the Silver Spring and Forest Glen Metrorail stops on the Red line and by Metrobus.

**Tenleytown** is a residential area located near American University's main campus. Apartment buildings and mixed-use developments along Wisconsin Avenue house numerous eateries and big box retailers.

**Cleveland Park/Woodley Park** is a quiet area just east of American University. There are many single-family homes that rent basement apartments to students. Some homes are rented to groups. There are also many large apartment buildings along Connecticut Avenue. The National Zoo and National Cathedral are nearby, and the neighborhood is convenient for shopping.

## Rental Tips and Expectations

### Applying for a Rental Unit

Most landlords will ask you to complete a rental application form. The application will typically ask for the following information:

Name, address, and telephone number

Current and past landlords

Social Security and driver's license numbers

Bank account and credit card numbers and addresses

Financial information regarding your ability to pay the rent (e.g., monthly income)

Names of people who will be living in the unit

A landlord may ask about information that reflects on your ability to pay the rent; however, federal, state and local laws prohibit landlords from discriminating against classes of people on arbitrary bases (e.g., race, gender, age, family status).

### Cost of Living

A few notes to remember while considering housing cost in D.C.:

- D.C. ranks in the top 5 for most expensive cities in the U.S.; the average monthly rent for a studio or 1 bedroom

apartment ranges from \$1,500 – 2,000/\$2,750- 3,500 for a 2 bedroom apartment

- 2016-2017 Metcalf Interns who had an internship in the reported to have spent the following over the course of the summer:

- Average Cost of Food/Utilities/Transportation/Entertainment: \$1800
- Average Rent: \$3200
- Average Total Cost: \$5000

While researching for apartments to rent, be aware of scammers on rental websites (e.g. Craigslist). A common tactic used by the seller is stating that they will be out of the city for months, limiting their accessibility. According to two students trying to find housing over the summer, "We also noticed that a lot of the scam responses were the same, someone leaving the city for 3-9 months for a job."

- Be sure to get in contact (via phone, Skype, etc.) with your landlord or leaser before agreeing to rent the vacancy. Whenever possible, you should visit the space before signing a lease.

## DC TRANSPORTATION

### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

You will most likely be using the Metro to get to and from work each day, and past interns have only had positive things to say about the Metro. WMATA has bus, subway and rail systems that serve the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and the Maryland D.C. suburbs, and it is the second largest rail system and the fifth largest bus network in the U.S. ([www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com))

- Metrobus* operates from 5:30am-12:00am on weeknights and 5:30am-3:00am on weekends. Consider purchasing the Past SmarTrip card and the rate is \$1.75. The fare for express routes is \$4.00 using a SmarTrip® card or cash. You must have exact change
- Metrorail* operates from 5:00am-12:00am on weekdays and 7:00am-3:00am on weekends. Peak SmarTrip® Fares (in effect weekdays from opening to 9:30 am and 3-7 pm and weekends midnight to closing) are a \$2.15 minimum and a \$5.90 maximum. Off-Peak SmarTrip® Fares (all other times) are a \$1.75 minimum and a \$3.60 maximum.

### Maryland Rail Commuter Service

The MARC is the regional rail system and is administrated by the Maryland Transit Administration. Fares depend on how far you travel but College students are eligible for reduced fares,



so check out their website before you travel:  
<http://mta.maryland.gov/marc-fares>.

### **Virginia Railway Express**

These commuter trains provide service from Union Station to Fredericksburg and Manassas, VA, and the trains also stop at several Metro stations. Fares depend on how far you travel:  
<http://www.xmata.com/index.cfm>

### **D.C. Safety**

After living in the city of Chicago, you should be well-versed in safety precautions for urban environments. However, here are some basic tips you should be reminded of before your internship in D.C. Using common sense is good advice and you should also read the following tips for a quick refresher.

#### **General Safety Tips:**

- Always remember that there is safety in numbers. Walk with friends, or take populated routes when going places. Be especially careful when walking at night.
- Plan your route in advance, walk with a purpose, and be alert at all times, especially when talking on a cell phone or using headphones.
- Avoid deserted areas such as parks, alleys, and vacant lots.

- If you think you're being followed, cross the street, change direction, or go to a public place.
- Never display large amounts of cash or flaunt jewelry or cameras in public. If you need to organize your wallet, duck into a store.
- Don't keep your wallet in the back pocket of your pants or backpack, and be aware of your wallet or purse in commotions. Pickpockets often use helpers to create disturbances nearby.
- Use caution when using ATMs and don't carry too much cash around with you. Most places accept credit cards and there are ATMs everywhere. Just make sure you choose one that is in a busy, well-lighted area.
- When Using Public Transportation: On the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's website there are customer safety instructions with a variety of safety information for the Metro. Visit: [www.wmata.com/getting\\_around/safety\\_security](http://www.wmata.com/getting_around/safety_security) to find out more.
- Avoid empty subway cars. Ride with many people or in the conductor's car (usually the middle car of the train).

### **Connect with Alumni**

While you're in D.C. this summer, take advantage of the opportunity to connect with another great resource: University of Chicago alumni! Whether you're interested in working in D.C. after graduation, or you wish to find out more about certain career paths, networking with alumni may be one of the most beneficial things you do during your summer. Research alumni who are currently working in D.C., through the UChicagoWisr Network, an alumni mentoring platform: <https://uchicago.wisr.io/signup> and the online alumni directory: <http://www.uchicagoalumni.org>.

