Student parlays guest lecture into congressional internship

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Josh Asarnow (BSM’22), left, greets Sen. Bill Cassidy following his talk to energy students at the Freeman School on Nov. 5, 2021. Asarnow turned the meeting into an internship in Cassidy’s state headquarters office in Baton Rouge.

When Sen. Bill Cassidy visited Freeman in November, students got an up-close audience with one of the lead architects of the historic bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Freeman student Josh Asarnow (BSM ’22) got something else: A congressional internship.

Asarnow turned Cassidy’s guest lecture appearance into a job in the senator’s state headquarters office in Baton Rouge.

“I never thought I’d end up in this role,” he says. “but the opportunity presented itself, so I grabbed it.”

A senior majoring in finance and history, Asarnow had previously interned in private equity and asset management and expected to continue in that direction, but when he learned that Cassidy would be talking to energy students about the infrastructure bill, he read up on the legislation and prepared some questions about the bill’s impact on Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards’ goal of “net zero” carbon emissions by 2050.

When he arrived at the classroom on the morning of Cassidy’s talk, he had a realization.

“There were only about 20 other students there,” Asarnow recalls. “It was almost like a one-on-one session. I realized this was my opportunity to network with a U.S. senator.”

Asarnow asked Cassidy his questions during the talk. When it was over, he went to the front of the room, introduced himself and asked what he could do to get a job in his office. He walked out with business cards from both Cassidy and his communications director, Shawn Hanscom.

Over the next few weeks, Asarnow called and emailed Hanscom, reminding him they’d met during Cassidy’s talk at Freeman and asking if there were any positions available. Just when he had given up hope, he got an email from Hanscom inviting him to interview for an internship. With the help of some coaching from Dale Klamfoth, executive director or Freeman’s Career Management Center, Asarnow aced the interview.

Since January, Asarnow’s been traveling to Baton Rouge twice a week to work in Cassidy’s office. While much of the job consists of typical intern responsibilities like answering phones and filing paperwork, Asarnow also gets to work on a variety of legislative projects.

“Right now, I’m working on new legislation Sen. Cassidy is developing to support the adoption of clean hydrogen,” Asarnow says. “So I have access and the ability to

work directly on the issues and cases where my interests lie.”

While he’s still leaning toward a career in asset management, Asarnow says he plans to continue working for Cassidy until graduation, and he’s leaving open the possibility of continuing the internship further or even transferring to Cassidy’s Washington DC office.

“A senate internship gives you the ability to pivot in your career, because whether it’s business or politics, working within the system and understanding the way regulations work are invaluable skills to have,” he says. “For me, the big takeaway is not to be focused on a strict career path. Things happen suddenly, and you have to be open to embracing those unexpected opportunities.”