

During the 2016-2017 school year our ICMA Student Chapter sought to build on many of the accomplishments that we had built upon in the 2015-2016 year. In the course of that year we had two speakers come in the fall and spring respectively, and made two visits to city halls. 2015-2016 focused on taking a vignette of what city government does and allowing our chapter members to see that. Similarly the 2016-2017 focused on understanding how local government works, but it also centered on how public officials can better engage with those that they serve.

For our first event in this school year we welcomed Artie Fields who is the City Manager of Inglewood California, as well as our chapter mentor. Mr. Fields had come to speak to us the previous year, and we had felt as though it was productive for our members to understand who their mentor was. This was so there could be easy guidance as far as what direction to go for a career in local government. He provided a detailed account of his career through local government, and he explained many of the issues that face his city. Mr. Fields also spoke about the way that his city addresses citizen concerns, and this directly related to the goals that we were trying to meet for the 2016-2017 year.

During our second event we welcomed Talyn Mirzakhonian, who is a City Planner in Calabasas, CA. Ms. Mirzakhonian spoke about her academic history, as well as the practical experience that she has had in Calabasas. She brought us some examples of the work that she had been doing, which produced a lot of interest. Furthermore, she was able to answer many questions that our members had as far as how to get involved in local government. There was also an explanation of the roles that citizens take in decision making. Finally, Ms. Mirzakhonian was able to meet with a few of our members, as the city was offering internships. In the end two internships were offered to our members, and one accepted the position. This proved to be a successful meeting, as it helped a couple of our members further their professional development.

In our third event we heard from Pete Peterson, who is the Dean of our Public Policy School. He has routinely worked on the topic of public engagement with local governments through the Davenport Institute, and he continues to do this as Dean. The main focus of his presentation was centered on how local governments can better include their citizens in the decision making process. Throughout the event we heard about some successes that cities have had in bringing public engagement, and we also heard about failures that have taken place. One of the most important parts of the meeting took place when we heard why public engagement is so significant. When there are more citizens involved, and a better discussion process, there is a government that operates better, and is more apt to meet the needs of those it serves. This event helped our members to learn about the importance of public engagement.

In the 2016-2017 school year we had three successful events, and we met the objectives we had set for ourselves. I hope that this past year is something that the chapter can build on in the 2017-2018 school year and beyond.