

HMC Student Intern Responses 2024

Nicole Le	
School Name	Dozier-Libbey Medical High School
Grade/Academic Level	Junior
Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.	I do not know anything about the topic, however, I am open to learn about it!
Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.	Key Club hosts volunteering events that has to do with cleaning up public areas such as parks, namely Worth Shaw Community Park.
College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.	I would love to study forensics and in the umbrella term of forensics includes environmental forensics. I want to learn more about the field of forensics from the environment and its hazardous materials to forensics related to crime scene investigations to even DNA.
Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.	The most important environmental issue that is important to me has to be global warming. With the planet warming up, it's causing many animals to lose their habitats to fires, or in the case of more icy environments, melting. With the loss of their habitats, animals are becoming extinct and I feel that this upcoming mass extinction could have been prevented if we didn't use as much greenhouse gases as we've used. Even with a small effort, I believe that that effort can spark bigger communities to contribute to the cause as well if done right.
Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?	Nothing in particular, but I'm glad to be having this opportunity to potentially join in this internship!

Aimee Benedict	
School Name	Diablo Valley College
Grade/Academic Level	Sophomore
Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.	Toxic material disposal, such as oil, treated wood, etc, and the releases of toxins from facilities such as chemical industries and refineries, and a hotline for reports, and a community warning system in Contra Costa County for hazardous materials.
Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.	I've volunteered in the past with the Sierra Club to be informed of environmental and local environmental issues, and Ive had some local organization information about refinery topics.
College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.	Yes- because I'm taking a course to be a Community Health Worker, and a role of it is to be an informational link for the community about health related topics and community safety. Also, I've worked as a CNA, and environmental issues affect people's health.
Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.	I live near the Richmond refinery, so I think that clean air is important to me as well as being informed about what a system is if there is any kind of emergency relating to either man made or natural disasters. Also, just basically being informed of procedures and current events that are occurring.
Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?	Being empowered by knowledge is helpful with regards to the topic.

Hien Hoang	
School Name	Freedom Highschool
Grade/Academic Level	Senior
<p>Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.</p>	<p>Through my coursework in AP Environmental Science, I've gained a deeper understanding of the interactions between hazardous materials and ecosystems. One of the key areas we explored was how pollutants, particularly chemical waste, can affect water, air, and soil quality which aligns with the mission of the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission to protect and promote the health, safety, and well-being of Contra Costa residents as they are affected by hazardous materials and hazardous waste. In my class we also discussed the importance of environmental policy in managing these materials to prevent harm to both human health and wildlife. For instance, I learned about the Clean Water Act, which regulates pollutants in U.S. waters, as well as the challenges associated with hazardous waste disposal. I also took AP Biology, where I developed an in-depth understanding of ecological systems and human impacts on the environment. After passing the AP Biology exam, I participated in a field trip to the Dutch Slough, where we studied wetlands restoration and how such efforts help combat environmental degradation. These lessons have taught me the need for responsible management of hazardous materials to mitigate their environmental impact.</p>
<p>Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.</p>	<p>I've actively applied my knowledge of environmental issues through leadership in Healtheory, a youth-led nonprofit dedicated to uplifting the health of adversity-exposed communities through service and health education. I founded Healtheory as the first health-based service club at my school, where we raise awareness about the intersection of health and the environment, including how exposure to hazardous materials disproportionately affects low-income communities. In addition to my role in Healtheory, I had the opportunity to complete a 10-week research internship with a doctor, where we explored some environmental issues, deepening my understanding of their broader impact on public health. I also mentored a student in a research paper writing competition, where we won 2nd place, further developing my leadership and mentoring skills.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, I gained valuable marketing experience through an internship with Mind4Youth, where I created social media content about how the environment can influence people’s mental health to support their mission. In addition, I am a member of the Refresh Club, which focuses on helping the environment through initiatives like the Marsh Creek Clean-up and gardening days at my school. These activities have deepened my understanding of environmental sustainability and provided hands-on experience in protecting local ecosystems.</p>
<p>College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.</p>	<p>I’m currently a high school senior at Freedom High School, and my long-term goal is to become a Physician Assistant (PA) with a focus on public health and environmental safety. This internship would offer valuable experience in understanding how policy can reduce the risks associated with hazardous materials exposure, an issue that overlaps with my interests in both healthcare and environmental protection.</p>
<p>Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.</p>	<p>I am particularly interested in how hazardous materials disproportionately affect low-income communities and the importance of raising awareness among youth. These communities often face higher exposure to pollutants such as industrial waste and poor air quality, leading to significant health risks. Educating younger generations about the environmental and health impacts of hazardous materials is crucial for fostering a more informed and active society. By spreading awareness, we can empower youth to advocate for stronger environmental policies and contribute to long-term solutions that protect vulnerable populations.</p>
<p>Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?</p>	<p>My passion for environmental protection and community health aligns perfectly with the mission of the Hazardous Materials Commission. As someone who has studied environmental science, passed the AP Biology exam, completed a research internship, and been involved in health-focused service work, I am eager to contribute to the development of policies that protect both our environment and public health. This internship represents an exciting opportunity to learn more about environmental policy and to apply my background in a meaningful way.</p>

Gurjot Kahlon	
School Name	Dozier Libbey Medical HS
Grade/Academic Level	Senior
<p>Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.</p>	<p>The Contra Costa HMC is responsible for not only the safety of citizens through the safe cleanup and disposal of hazardous materials at a moment's notice, along with this public service the HMC keeps tabs on any potential public safety issues such as when a fire had occurred at Martinez Renewables in 2023, where the HMC and other organizations worked to both quell the fire and evaluate the damages to the land and environment, along with publishing multiple reports, both within 3 days of the incident and many monthly follow-up reports and the final report which included details such as what, how much and where material was released, background on what the facility did, what happened, and more, all to ensure a safe community, free from hazardous waste and materials.</p>
<p>Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.</p>	<p>While I do wholeheartedly believe I lack in good experiences in involvements in clubs or official projects, I've done a few assignments on environmental issues, like I once had a paper on whether or not Meat should be banned where I addressed climate and the environment as an argument as if cows and other animals were to be stopped being raised by the farmers, many landscapes would lose a vital part of their ecosystem.</p>
<p>College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.</p>	<p>Yes. As a High School senior, I am gearing up to go to college and as an Undeclared Engineering major, and tinkering is a hobby of mine that I plan on carrying through my being able to learn about how Hazardous Materials and how they are disposed. This allows me to have the know how on the safe and effective removal of materials I may encounter over the course of my life. Also, knowing of city logistics and how these types of public services operate.</p>
<p>Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.</p>	<p>While I do lack official experience with environmental issues such as through projects or clubs, my daily interaction with environmental issues are present and do cause me to have to address said issues on my own terms. When either taking walks, going from class to class, I constantly deal with litter, granted everyone does, but it's frankly annoying. Like seriously can people not just walk to a can and throw it away? Animals, and people are hurt by this practice and frankly its ridiculous.</p>

<p>Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?</p>	<p>If accepted I'd hope to learn about what kinds of materials are hazardous and in what quantities, along with how the responses to such reports occur and function. As much it may be surprising I actually don't mind learning about how these services work and all the details that are involved, as long as I find it interesting I am willing to learn about it. As for Boards and Commissions the administrative side while just the same amount of interesting I'd much rather learn about WHAT the Commission governs than HOW it governs.</p>
--	--

Alexander Gomez	
School Name	San Francisco State University
Grade/Academic Level	Senior in College
<p>Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.</p>	<p>As I would do house cleaning and handy work with my father, he and I would sometimes have to dispose of paint, junk chemicals, or something that I just learned that the hazardous materials handles, mattresses. Most places that recycle in Richmond are private, so after finding out about CC hazardous materials recycling center we go there as it's affordable and convenient.</p>
<p>Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.</p>	<p>Environmental health and safety is a large component in many of the major biology classes I take (as I am a biology/human physiology) major at SFSU. The topic of how certain cells get damaged from environmental aspects that occur in mainly underserved communities explains many of the reasons why those communities have long time health issues throughout generations. For example, a certain fungal toxin (aflatoxin B1) that mainly infects corn, is a carcinogen. Many farmer communities end up having higher cancer incidence rates because of this.</p>
<p>College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.</p>	<p>I hope to bring my goal of becoming pediatric endocrinologist to environmental policy as policy, would be the first step to decreasing preventable diseases that are mainly influenced by the environment. As being a clinician is my main dream, I want to make a lasting positive impact on my community. To do so, I believe that I must participate in health adjacent policy simultaneously to be a leader in not only treatment in the clinic, but prevention on a county scale.</p>
<p>Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.</p>	<p>Food security is always on my mind as it is one of the leading causes of pediatric diabetes. Food security and socioeconomic status is a big social determinant of diabetes in many underserved communities.</p> <p>Additionally, other more severe diseases and infections can be caused by poor disposal or handling of chemicals. Being raised in Richmond made me familiar with situations like this as a result of the chevron refinery explosion that happened in 2012. Luckily, I am not facing any direct health issues because of that, but other people in my community may not be as fortunate to be healthy because of this event.</p>

Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?

I am eager to offer my passion, skills, and dedication to the city that I grew up in. Health and environmental policy working hand in hand can make a longer lasting impact than solely treating diseases in the clinic.

Maritza Montano	
School Name	Dozier libbey medical highschool
Grade/Academic Level	Senior
Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've you've previously learned.	I have not, and I could not access the website.
Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.	I did a research assignment my junior year, arguing whether or not we should apply stringent laws to restore world preservation. It addressed the carbon emission issues, the acidification of oceans, rising sea levels, the pollution that humans create by carelessly throwing trash on the streets, and biodiversity. Animals are becoming endangered to extinction leading to less biodiversity.
College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.	I have a deep interest in learning about the environment and how it can affect a persons health. My current area of study involves the medical field and the environment plays a huge role in someone's health. Public health is a major that has caught my attention recently, which advocates for a safe environment for a healthy population.
Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.	When school is finished, I place my hand on my black car, and I burn myself, as if I placed my hand on a burning stove. I sit inside and I feel like I'm in an oven, with my all black leather seats burning me. The summer heat in California has been my biggest concern as it leads to uncontrollable wildfires and dangerous temperatures. Ensuring that the public does not panic and has enough water to survive these conditions, like homeless individuals. Another environmental issue is always garbage. Majority of times I see garbage out on the streets and I would like to someday go to classes and educate students about why it's important to take care of our environment.
Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?	I would like to use this opportunity to educate myself and use my knowledge to impact those around me about what issues we have in the environment. I would like to engage in fun activities, and gain invaluable experience that I would not have anticipated I'd have, before I joined. I would also like to contribute to a positive environment while establish meaningful connections.

Althea Bengco	
School Name	Laguardia Community College
Grade/Academic Level	Junior
Knowledge: Have you learned about topics that the Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Commission addresses? If so, please share a few examples of topics you've previously learned.	I have learned and heard about Contra Costa Hazardous Materials due to the hazardous storage and waste, to get rid of anything that harms our environment. Management for facilities storing hazardous materials, transportation of hazardous materials within the county, and public education regarding potential hazardous material risks within Contra Costa County, aiming to protect public health and the environment
Experience: What is your experience with environmental issues? Please describe your involvement with any clubs, local organizations, projects, research assignments, volunteering, classes/coursework, etc. that addresses any environmental issues.	Last semester, I have taken Environmental Psychology and Science; this studies the relationship between human beings and surroundings.
College & Career: Is your current area of study and/or future major/career goal related to environmental topics? Please list/describe.	Yes. Environmental Psychology, this field studies the relationship between humans and their surroundings, examining how environmental factors influence behavior and well-being. It looks at how natural spaces can enhance mental health, promote sustainable behavior, and influence community dynamics.
Topic of Interest: Please share an environmental issue or topic that is important to you or that may be affecting your community.	In my community, we've experienced increased drought and heatwaves, which threaten local infrastructure and public health. This not only disrupts daily life but also exacerbates socioeconomic disparities, as vulnerable populations often face the greatest risks. Addressing this issue involves promoting sustainable practices, enhancing community resilience, and advocating for policies that mitigate climate impacts, such as improved urban planning and green infrastructure initiatives.
Anything else you would like to share about yourself related to this internship opportunity or your interest in Boards and Commissions?	I believe that actively participating in decision-making processes is crucial for addressing local issues effectively. My background in psychology allows me to understand diverse perspectives and foster collaboration among community members. I am eager to contribute my skills and insights to initiatives that promote environmental awareness and drive positive change in our community.