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## OU student completes Brookings Institute internship

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University student Robert Hillman took his research skills from Rochester to Capitol Hill this past fall. The senior political science major got an insider's view of world politics as he completed a **Brookings Institution** internship in Washington, D.C.

Hillman spent the majority of his time performing research for Institute Scholar in Governance Studies Johannes Linn, former vice president of the World Bank for its European and Central Asian regions.

"It's been an incredible experience," said Hillman, whose internship began in September and ended Dec. 13. "The numbers of people I've met at Brookings and around Capitol Hill have been staggering. Many of them appear daily on CSPAN and TV shows like 'Hardball' on MSNBC. The Brookings scholars are the all-stars of the political and academic worlds. Some have work experience inside the government. Others have their doctorates and are conducting research.

"Before coming here, I didn't really understand how things function in Washington. To be in this environment and see how the world really works has been enlightening."

Among the people Hillman met were U.S. Senator John Carey, Robert McNamara (former secretary of defense in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations), Stephen Hess (Brookings scholar and former speechwriter for Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon) and Gregg Easterbrook (senior editor of "The New Republic").

"And I didn't just meet them but shared conversations with them over lunch," Hillman said. "Luncheons are held regularly for Brookings interns, and at the one with Easterbrook, he spoke about environmental issues."

Hillman began his internship in a more general role by facilitating the manuscript and book reviews of Brookings scholars. He also helped organize book release events before being assigned to work with Linn.

"Linn has been working on a project dealing with the economic disintegration of the former Soviet states. He's focusing on how those states were structured economically during their communist period and how their particular problems continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union," Hillman said. "He is to present a paper on this topic in Berlin to the European Economic Community, then go to Hungary to deliver a presentation to representatives of the former Soviet Union, and eventually publish his work.

"My role was to help Linn with his research by obtaining different journals and reading through the articles to find portions related to his research. I would meet with him daily and go over my work schedule for the day or week, then perform research on the Internet or at different libraries. I pinpointed what was relevant to his topic, and then passed the information on to him. There's still a lot of work to do on methodological problems, which are enormous. It was a great way to keep my research skills sharp."

Hillman's experience in Washington is directing him toward an academic career.

"Being here has helped me pare down and clarify what I want to do," Hillman said. "I enjoyed working with Linn and became more interested in the academic aspect of politics. I've learned how labor-intensive this work is.

"The people at Brookings are absolutely brilliant and can break things down to identify future trends. They love what they do, and I loved working there. I think it would be a wonderful way to make a living. I've found that I'm most interested in jurisprudence and the theory behind law. I have the most pleasure studying political theory. So my plan is to go to law school and then obtain a doctorate."

Upon returning to OU for the winter semester, Hillman will incorporate his Brookings experience into an academic paper to fulfill his obligation toward the Political Science Department's Public Affairs Internship class. Thereafter, Hillman plans to travel again – this time to South America.

“My goal for the next year is to develop some foreign language skills,” said Hillman, who also **traveled to South Africa in 2002** with the National Youth Leadership Forum to work with AIDS patients. “I’d like to go to South America to teach English through an NGO (non-governmental organization). There are opportunities to work there and learn Spanish by living with a host family. I want to take a look at the possibilities after I graduate.”

The Brookings Institution is an independent, nonpartisan organization devoted to research, analysis, education and publication focused on public policy issues in the areas of economics, foreign policy and governance. For more information, visit the **Brookings Institution** Web site.

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