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## Roxbury resident lands White House internship

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 14, 2011 12:22 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

In his Dudley Square apartment, UMass Boston senior Reynolds Graves clicked open an e-mail several weeks ago that he'd been dreaming of for half of his life.

The 22-year-old Michigan native, who now considers Roxbury his home, had known since age 10 that he wanted to pursue a career in government and politics, and there he was reading a message from the White House inviting him to spend the coming semester working in the West Wing.



"I'm pretty sure I jumped up on my desk chair after opening the e-mail and pumped my fist in the air to some loud music," Graves wrote in an e-mail to Boston.com mediated by White House media relations staff. "My first thought was to call my dad and close friends and share the good news with them, but I was so excited I could hardly speak. I had to calm down, and then I called them that night."

Graves is one of 11 college students who are either native to or attend school in Massachusetts that were accepted as [White House interns](#) this spring. Officials at the infamous Pennsylvania Avenue estates declined to disclose how many students

typically apply to the program, but they said the nationwide selection process of around 100 unpaid interns each fall, spring and summer "is highly competitive."

A political science major at the state university's campus in Dorchester, Graves has previous experience witnessing Washington politics up close. He interned in the D.C. offices of Michigan Democrats Rep. John Conyers and Sen. Carl Levin. He also said he has interned in the offices of Gov. Deval Patrick and Mayor Thomas M. Menino. His most recent internship was with the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt at the American embassy in Cairo.

"After these experiences I felt I could be a positive asset to the Obama-Biden administration as an intern and also fulfill my desire to serve the

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administration,” wrote Graves, adding that he had volunteered with other students for Obama’s presidential campaign at primaries in North Carolina and South Carolina.

Graves said he sees this internship as a continued step toward his goal of making a career out of public service. After his college graduation in June, he said he plans to join the Navy as commissioned officer, which he called “the ultimate public service occupation.” He’s also eyeing an eventual law degree. Though he said he’s most attracted to pursuing public office, he is considering other ways to be involved with public policy.

“I would never pursue [public office] just to run, or just to be called ‘Representative,’ ‘Governor’ or ‘Senator,’” Graves said. “I love watching government work for its people: the senior citizen that needs health care benefits, the child who gets new books at school, the driver who cruises down a paved avenue or the soldier who can serve beyond our borders and return safely as a patriot.”

“A lot of people said ‘Oh you’re going to work for Obama,’” he continued, “but I realized on the first day [of the internship] that the Presidency and the Executive Office are bigger than any one man. Yes, the President is an inspiration to me, but I did not pursue this internship, or any others, for superficial reasons.”

Since late-January, Graves has been working in Vice President Joe Biden’s scheduling office – one of 12 office divisions that together handle “all of the Vice President’s correspondences, speechwriting, events, scheduling, and travel,” according to a description on the White House website.

After studying in Virginia for two years, Graves said he moved to Roxbury and enrolled at UMass Boston in fall 2008.

Though notably different from Grosse Pointe, Mich., where Graves was born and raised and described as “a small, affluent Midwestern suburb,” of Detroit, he said he now thinks of the Boston neighborhood as home.

“I love Roxbury - the town’s energy, its people and its history,” he said. “The people have embraced me as if I was a native and I can walk into O’Aces Barber Shop to catch up with Brown whether or not I am getting a haircut. I can go to Haley House or Slades [Bar and Grill] and see familiar faces; or to Charles Street [African Methodist Episcopal] Church to hear Reverend [Gregory G.] Groover preach a great sermon on Sunday.”

Graves expressed gratitude for support from friends and family, including from a group of fourth and fifth grade boys he mentors at the Hugh R. O’Donnell Elementary School in East Boston.

“They gave me a package of hand-made congratulations cards on my last day with them, and I brought them to D.C.” he said.

“My friends as far back as my elementary school days, ones I have made since I moved to Boston and everywhere in-between, think that [landing this internship] is pretty cool,” wrote Graves. “Anyone who knows me knows that when I focus on something that I really want, I pursue it and succeed. I have been told landing the White House Internship is just another example.”

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*Below is a list of the 11 spring 2011 White House interns who have Bay State ties. Alongside their names are each intern’s hometown and the higher*

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