



PEORIA – A new award will allow Bradley University students to have a fully funded, once-in-a-lifetime public service experience at the U.S. Capitol, thanks to a recently established partnership between Bradley and the Dirksen Congressional Center.

The Michel-LaHood Summer Congressional Internship Program will provide stipends covering at least \$7,000 in housing, living and travel expenses, enabling up to three students a year to participate in summer internships in congressional offices on Capitol Hill. These awards will eliminate financial barriers that often prevent students from applying for such an experience.

Inspiration for the new scholarship comes from conversations between Ray LaHood and leaders at Bradley University and the Dirksen Center over their shared aspiration for more Bradley students to receive on-the-job experience in Washington, D.C., while exploring a future in public service.

LaHood, the former member of Congress and U.S. Transportation Secretary, is a 1971 Bradley alumnus and a senior adviser at the Dirksen Center. The internship program is named for him, as well as his predecessor and mentor Bob Michel, the former House Minority Leader and a 1948 Bradley alumnus. Between them, Michel and LaHood mentored decades of public servants and key leaders in the business and nonprofit sectors.

"As someone who spent many years working in congressional offices, and then had the privilege of representing Illinois in Congress, I know how crucial it is for the next generation of public servants to reflect a diverse array of talents and backgrounds," LaHood said. "Removing any financial roadblocks to this experience ensures that our government, especially in 'the people's House,' can draw from a deeper talent pool and have many valuable perspectives represented."

"I am thrilled Bradley University is partnering with the Dirksen Center to deliver this phenomenal experiential learning opportunity," said Bradley University President Stephen Standifird. "The internship program will stand as a perennial source of inspiration to our students and university community. It is also a powerful reminder of the profound legacy of public service and bipartisan leadership represented by the exceptional careers of Bob Michel and Ray LaHood. I am convinced this program will have a profound impact on the lives and future careers of some very fortunate Bradley students."

"We're pleased to take this next step in our ongoing partnership with Bradley University," Dirksen Center Executive Director Tiffany White said. "Our archives are replete with examples of bipartisan servant-leadership and a strong tradition of mentorship by our members of Congress. Today more than ever, it's important for that spirit to continue. Dedicated students deserve the opportunity to fall in love with public service."

Members of Congress who have agreed to host interns include Reps. Darin LaHood (IL-16), Robin Kelly (IL-2), and Eric Sorensen (IL-17). LaHood and Sorensen represent Peoria; Kelly received her bachelor's (1977) and master's (1982) degrees from Bradley and is a Bradley University trustee.

"As a former intern and staffer on Capitol Hill, and now a Member of Congress, I know the importance of hiring good staff, preparing the next generation of public servants in our country, and supporting youth engagement in our democracy," said Rep. LaHood. "The partnership between Bradley University and the Dirksen Congressional Center will help students in central Illinois achieve their goals and provide opportunities to those who may not have the means to participate in a Capitol Hill internship otherwise. My office is proud to participate in this program, which will help grow the long list of dedicated and decorated public servants who hail from central Illinois."

"Bradley University is an institution that is dear to my heart and I am so proud that the university will continue to play such an important role in shaping future leaders of our state and our country," remarked Rep. Kelly. "The voices of young people are critical to solve the issues of today and confront the challenges of tomorrow."

"I applaud former Transportation Secretary LaHood, Bradley University leadership, and the Dirksen Center for leading this effort to make public service more accessible for students," said Rep. Sorensen. "As the son of a Bradley alumnus, I look forward to welcoming some of the university's most talented students to Washington, D.C., to help serve the American people."

Bradley undergraduates from all academic majors are eligible to participate. They will have the option of earning academic credit for the internship and an additional American government course through Bradley's Department of Political Science, which will play a role in selecting applicants alongside representatives from the Dirksen Center and Bradley's Institute for Principled Leadership in Public Service. The funded internships will be awarded by the Dirksen Center through an endowed fund first established by LaHood in 2004.

That fund also supports the annual Ray and Kathy LaHood Scholarship, awarded to Bradley juniors and seniors studying in fields that can lead to public service.

Applications for the new congressional internship program may be submitted beginning Feb. 6 and are due Feb. 28. Selected students will be notified in March.

Events to support the endowment fund will include a kickoff gala at the Peoria Riverfront Museum later this year. Donations can also be made to the Ray LaHood Fund, c/o The Dirksen Congressional Center, 2815 Broadway, Pekin, IL 61554

Since 1973, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Dirksen Congressional Center has promoted research and scholarship to advance the public understanding of the U.S. Congress, its people and its policies. Located in Pekin, Illinois, it holds the papers of its namesake, 1964 Civil Rights Act architect U.S. Sen. Everett Dirksen, as well as those of House Minority Leader Bob Michel; U.S. Rep. and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood; U.S. Rep. Cheri Bustos; U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis; U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger; and Time magazine congressional correspondent Neil MacNeil.

Bradley University is a top-ranked, private university in Peoria, Illinois, offering nearly 6,000 undergraduate and graduate students opportunities, choices, and resources to build their futures. Innovation, action and collaboration drive Bradley students to generate ideas and create solutions that remake the world around them. Its comprehensive array of undergraduate and graduate academic programs includes business, communications, education, engineering, fine arts, health sciences, liberal arts and sciences, and technology.