

Heather Higginbottom

BA in Political Science, 1994

At Rochester, Heather was drawn to studying political issues such as urban policy and education. During her junior year, she got her first taste of D.C. as part of the **Washington Semester Program**, working alongside several other interns in the office of U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews of New Jersey. Then she met U.S. Rep. Gene Green, a Houston Democrat who had just been elected and had yet to hire an intern. By the summer between her junior and senior years, she was coordinating Green's intern program. In her senior year at Rochester, she enrolled in a graduate seminar on urban politics, sitting alongside PhD students.

After Rochester, Heather returned to Washington and found a job with the nonprofit Communities in Schools, which focused on programs to keep high school students from dropping out. After completing a master's degree in public policy and philosophy from George Washington University, she worked for U.S. Sen. John Kerry, rising from a legislative assistant to his deputy national policy director during the 2004 presidential campaign and establishing a reputation as one of the nation's leading policy mavens.

After Kerry's defeat, Heather became executive director of the American Security Project, a think tank Kerry helped establish that promotes the debate over the appropriate use of American power in the 21st century. She returned to Kerry's staff in February 2006 until she resigned a year later to join the Obama campaign.

As policy director of Obama's campaign, she spent 20 months helping outline the ideas and strategies that successfully put him into the White House. She met regularly with Obama, hashing out the broad outlines of policies that she'd refine with her staff. She helped prep Obama for debates with Republican John McCain, and she was often on the phone with journalists, explaining the details of the candidate's campaign goals. After Obama was elected president, Heather served as deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council, one of the key advisory boards that guide presidential decision making. She has since been appointed deputy director of the federal Office of Management and Budget, nominated by Obama.

"I was always interested in government. I had the good fortune to work with someone who ran for president. Once you do that, and you see the potential for change that you can make in people's lives, it's addictive."

The Department of Political Science's **Washington Semester Program** offers credit-bearing internships in Congress, the executive branch, party campaign committees, and lobbying, advocacy, and policy groups. Students gain hands-on experience learning about government, political campaigns, and public policies.
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