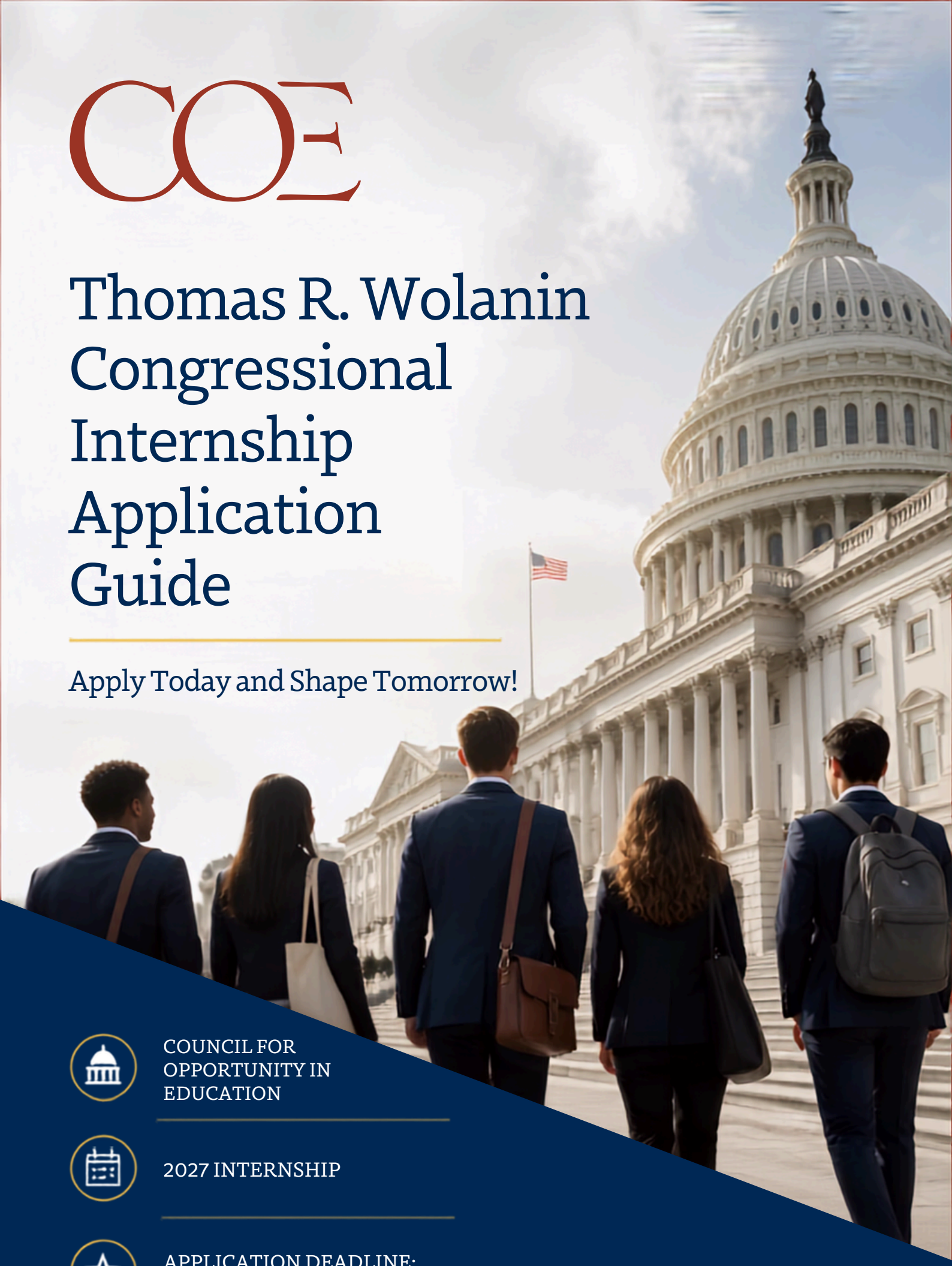
Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship Application Guide

Apply Today and Shape Tomorrow!



COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION

2027 INTERNSHIP

APPLICATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 19, 2026

COE

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship Program. For more than 10 years, we have connected talented students with meaningful opportunities on Capitol Hill and empowered them to learn, lead, and make a difference.

This handbook is your guide to the Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship Program. Inside, you will find answers to common questions, an explanation of each step in the internship process, and practical information to help you prepare for an internship experience in Washington, D.C. Our goal is to ensure you feel informed, confident, and ready to submit a strong application package.

INSIDE, YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT:

- The Wolanin Legacy
- Program Overview
- Professional Commitment
- Eligibility & Application Process
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Program Contact Information

A LEGACY OF OPPORTUNITY. A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITY.

COE PURPOSE

The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) mobilizes leaders to advance educational opportunity through advocacy, collaboration, and service.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION

The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), founded in 1981, is a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding college access for low-income, first-generation students across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the Pacific Islands, and Puerto Rico. With more than 1,000 member colleges and agencies, COE works to help students enter college and graduate. Each year, nearly 817,000 students receive critical college access and retention services through COE's member institutions.

THE WOLANIN LEGACY

Thomas R. Wolanin was a federal policy leader, educator, and lifelong advocate who believed in the power of educational opportunity. An architect of the federal Pell Grant program and supporter of federal TRIO programs, he dedicated his career to expanding college access opportunities for first-generation and low-income students.

CARRYING THE LEGACY FORWARD

Today, COE continues Thomas Wolanin's work by championing policies, programs, and partnerships that impact educational access for underserved communities.

This internship opportunity honors Mr. Wolanin's leadership and commitment to creating change through education policy.

THE LEGACY CONTINUES WITH YOU

As a Wolanin intern, you ensure that the Wolanin legacy lives on and that educational opportunity remains a promise we keep for generations to come.

Thomas R. Wolanin
Policy Leader, Educator, Lifelong Advocate.

Leadership
Sets the Course

Service
Lights the Way

Advocacy
Opens Doors

Educational
Opportunity
Changes Lives

COE

Your Path. Your Impact. Our Nation's Future.

The COE Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship Program empowers students to lead, serve, and create change—in their communities, in Washington, D.C., and beyond.

WHY THIS INTERNSHIP MATTERS

COE connects TRIO graduates with life-changing opportunities in public service. You will build skills, expand your network, and help shape the future through meaningful work.

YOUR ROAD TO CAPITOL HILL

From your time at the COE office to your work on Capitol Hill, you will gain hands-on experience, professional development, and personal growth.

YOUR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

More than an internship—this experience prepares you to lead with confidence, purpose, and develop a lasting commitment to service.

FOUR STAGES OF THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE:

1 ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON

You will arrive in D.C., move into your housing, and connect with COE Staff.

2 EXPERIENCE COE

While working at the COE office, you will take part in professional development, leadership training, and community building.

3 TRANSITION TO CAPITOL HILL

You'll receive your Congressional placement details and prepare for your office assignment.

4 WORK AND LEARN

Intern in your Congressional office, and gain valuable work experience while continuing to strengthen your leadership skills.

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

COE is proud to provide financial support to help you focus on your internship experience.

$2,700
MONTHLY STIPEND

To support your daily living expenses.

$1,500
HOUSING ALLOWANCE

To help offset your housing costs.

ROUND-TRIP AIRFARE

To and from Washington, D.C.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DATES

The Wolanin Internship will occur in the Spring semester of 2027. Specific program dates will be announced at a later time. Congressional placements are individualized, and timelines may vary based on office schedules and availability.

Professional Commitment

More Than an Internship

Being selected as a Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Intern means joining a fast-paced professional environment where you contribute as part of a dedicated team. This experience demands your full attention, energy, and commitment to making a meaningful impact.

The Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship is a full-time, immersive professional experience.

What to Expect

- Flexibility to adapt to shifting priorities and new challenges
- Curiosity about federal policy and the legislative process
- Initiative to seek out learning opportunities and contribute proactively
- Sound judgment in professional and political environments
- A genuine desire to learn, grow, and serve

Program Restrictions

During the internship, participants may not:

- ✗ Enroll in academic coursework
- ✗ Maintain a second job or employment
- ✗ Participate in another conflicting internship or professional program
- ✗ Keep recurring commitments that interfere with COE or congressional responsibilities

This internship is a unique opportunity to build professional skills, create lasting relationships, and gain firsthand exposure to federal policymaking. Your full commitment ensures you— and the communities you represent — gain the most from this opportunity.

ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION PROCESS

Application Deadline October 19, 2026

ELIGIBILITY

Candidates must meet the following criteria:

- An individual who has earned a bachelor's degree within the past five (5) years
- Has participated in a Federal TRIO Program (pre-college or undergraduate)
- Interest in public policy and advancing educational opportunity
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Adaptability and a willingness to learn
- Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities
- Commitment to teamwork and collaboration
- Technology readiness and comfort with digital tools

BUILD YOUR APPLICATION

Submit a complete application package.

1. Application ☐
2. Résumé ☐
3. Transcript ☐
4. Personal Statement ☐
5. Three (3) Professional References ☐
6. TRIO Program Recommendation ☐
7. Academic Recommendation ☐

APPLICATION LINK

The application can be accessed by scanning the QR code or by using the provided link.

https://bit.ly/27COEWolanin

FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

Q: Can I apply if I graduate in December, 2026?

Yes, you are eligible as long as you have completed your bachelor's degree before the internship start date.

Q: Can I choose my Congressional office?

The COE Governmental Relations Department manages the Congressional placement process for selected Wolanin interns. You may share your interests, but a particular office cannot be guaranteed.

Q: When will I know my exact internship dates?

Final dates cannot be provided until the selected candidate's Congressional placement is completed. For planning purposes, you should block your calendar from mid-January until mid-May.

Q: When will I find out if I have been selected?

Applicants will receive information about selection by the end of November.

FINAL APPLICATION
CHECKLIST

- ✓ Completed online application submitted
- ✓ Personal statement uploaded
- ✓ Two letters of recommendation submitted
- ✓ Official transcripts uploaded
- ✓ Standardized test scores (if applicable)
- ✓ Resume uploaded
- ✓ All information is accurate and complete

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CONTACT

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ACCESS. ACHIEVE. LEAD.