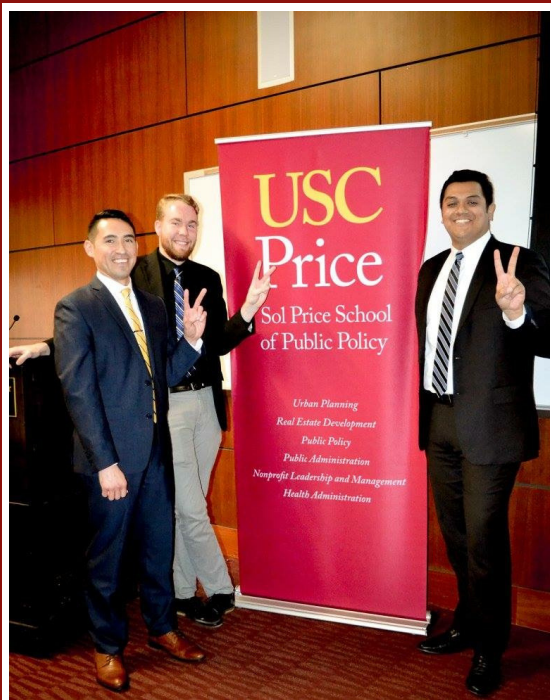




LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE CHALLENGE

As part of ongoing efforts to advance professional local government in Southern California and abroad, the USC chapter of ICMA was proud to host the Local Government Case Challenge on February 3rd, 2017. In its fifth year, the Annual Case Challenge provides student the opportunities to address contemporary issues facing local municipalities and bolster their professional experience with real world practice.

In preparation for the challenge, the USC Student Chapter issued Request For Proposals to professionals across Los Angeles County's 88 cities asking for challenges facing local institutions that might represent an educational and professional opportunity for students. Proposals received represented some of the most compelling and challenging issues facing local public institutions. Given the importance of communication and public relations to local government management, the ICMA@USC Executive Board selected the City of Signal Hill as the subject for this year's case challenge. From popular media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, to newer media tools such as Nextdoor and HootSuite, the ICMA Board desired to open a dialogue on the role of social media in civic engagement practices.





Participating graduate and undergraduate teams represented diverse backgrounds within the local public sector, the military, private businesses, and nonprofits. Over the course of just four days, these student teams were tasked with developing a social media strategy for the City, a particularly challenging assignment given the limitations of staffing, budget, and technical expertise facing City of Signal Hill staff. Their deliverables included a succinct staff report on their respective strategies, as well as an oral presentation of their findings. To represent the ever evolving nature of these challenges, participants were also given a final twist a day prior to the event; requiring the development of a hashtag campaign for the City of Signal Hill.

After a strenuous few days developing staff reports on their respective

"I had an amazing time participating in the ICMA case challenge! Professionally engaging and intellectually stimulating, I loved that the challenge gave us a real world issue for us to resolve and present before a board of highly regarded local administrators."

-Zachary Whalen, Member of 2017 Case Challenge Winner



strategies, student teams were asked to present their proposed plans of action before a board of 10 local government professionals. This collection of City Managers, Deputy City Managers, Communication Directors, County Assessors, and many others listened, questioned, and provided feedback to each of the presenting teams. Ultimately, one team was selected as the winners of the Case Challenge, and was awarded a prize of \$50 per person alongside other USC materials.

Beyond the competition itself, the event also provided an opportunity for students and professionals to discuss and consider communication and social media issues facing cities and counties. Over breakfast and lunch, individuals had the opportunity to meet and engage with one another, building social capital and connections between local government leaders and the next generation of public administrators.

Ultimately, the event successfully provided dozens of students the opportunity to engage and interact with some of the contemporary challenges facing local government administrators. Reaching beyond the walls of the classroom, the event brought a diverse group of individuals together to discuss and critique the democratic principles and efficient use of public resources associated with social media issues. It provided the small City of Signal Hill hundreds of hours of research and information that it might not have otherwise been able to afford. Perhaps most importantly, it helped develop and attract a number of individuals into becoming future leaders and visionaries in the local government profession.

