For the last three years, Andrea Bullard, a senior at UCLA, has served in Jumpstart as a Corps Member, Assistant Team Leader, and Team Leader.

When Bullard started the program, she, like many students found the position on the work-study website.

“I wanted to do something interactive,” says Bullard, “and I thought Jumpstart was perfect because there was more teaching involved instead of just taking care of kids.”

According to Jumpstart Southern California’s info sheet, the mission of the program is to provide young learners with core language, literacy, and social-emotional development skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. For a complete Academic year, UCLA students can expect to be placed in one of thirteen different classrooms working in teams to invest in the future of Southern California preschoolers. This is an investment that pays off. According to analysis by James Heckman, Nobel Laureate and economist, this type of program produces higher graduation rates, lower crime rates, and higher levels of lifetime productivity.

While Jumpstart’s main goal is to prepare young preschoolers for success, UCLA students, often find that they are in better positions to meet their own academic and career goals. For example, as a Jumpstart member, students are able to receive Internship Credit through the Center for Community Learning and additionally, many find that the Education Minor is a great fit for all the knowledge gained from the program. After school, the program provides a great addition to their resume and their direct experience gives them a competitive advantage in the career market.

“Corps members receive hands-on experience of what it’s like in the classroom.” says Sharon Hong, UCLA Site Co-coordinator, “Many interested in education may choose to teach older students, but Jumpstart allows you to understand where some of these students may have come from. Even if a career with children/education isn’t for you, Jumpstart does much to prepare you professionally. You develop leadership skills, teamwork, communication, improvisation. I guarantee you’ll leave the end of the year with greater preparation for life after college.”
It was the hands-on nature of Jumpstart that allowed Bullard, to find her passion and develop her teaching skills. Graduating next spring with a major in African American Studies, and minor in Education, Bullard looks to work with Teach for America in urban schools teaching History. “Going through Jumpstart is practical practice for Teach for America because they are looking for all the things I’ve already done like, working in teams, taking leadership on projects, confidence in the classroom, patience with children, and creating my own lesson plans.”

This year, the UCLA Jumpstart mega-site hired eighty students, and they welcome inquiries from anyone interested in the program for the 2015-16 academic year. Just a word of advice from Bullard, to all who are thinking about joining the program, “If you want to join, be dedicated. It can get hard; you’ve got mid-terms, finals, family issues, money problems and it’s difficult not to bring that into the classroom, so if it is something you really want to do, make sure you are focused and you are motivated because these little kids really need support and we can’t go in one day and drop out the next, these kids need stability.”

Jumpstart is part of the Center for Community Learning. For more information on how to apply, please visit the Jumpstart website.