

# PLEN: Women in Global Policy

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Meet Kayden McKenzie! Kayden majors in Political Science and Philosophy and minors in History. She is interested in a career in human rights work. Thanks to a grant from the Newcomb College Institute, she attended Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN)'s Women in Global Policy seminar. Read about her experience below:

Describe yourself and why you wanted to attend the PLEN conference:

I am a rising senior majoring in Political Science and Philosophy and minoring in History. I have been fascinated with global policy since the beginning of my academic experience, but I was unsure of how to pursue my interest professionally. I wanted to attend PLEN so that I could discover ways in which to begin a career working in global policy. Moreover, I am constantly thinking about what I will do after I graduate, and I believed that attending PLEN would allow me to have a better idea of my plans.

This summer, I will be interning in Washington D.C. at the State Department. I knew that attending PLEN before beginning my internship would be valuable for me because I could make connections in the area and hear advice about how to make the most of my summer in D.C.

What were your favorite parts of the conference?

My favorite part of the conference was the connections that I made with people. I met students from universities throughout the United States who had their own unique interests, but we all shared a passion for global policy. Moreover, I conversed with women who worked in all realms of global policy, whether it was in the non-profit sector or governmental work. I was pleased by how genuine all of these women were and how willing they were to give advice to other students. My favorite speakers were the group of Ambassadors because they had fascinating backgrounds and were extremely prominent in global policy, yet they were enthusiastic to converse with us and give us advice when we asked.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

We were able to spend one whole day at the State Department. First, we heard from a panel with a Foreign Service officer, a political appointee, and a woman who worked in the Civil Service. Then, we heard from a panel of senior level women who worked at the State Department. All of these women highlighted that there was an ideal job for every kind of person at the State Department, and it was interesting hearing about all of these different careers that are possible. However, despite these differences, all of the women on the panels discussed how much they loved their job. Their passion and energy kept me engaged, and I am now seriously considering pursuing a career at the State Department after my internship there.

After the panels, we participated in a diplomacy simulation. We were assigned to a country or a non-governmental organization and divided into groups to negotiate a

dispute with each other. Essentially, our goal was to find a solution to a complex international issue that all parties favored. Participating in this activity allowed us to see a more simplified, classroom version of how diplomacy works in action.

Detail what you learned that you hope to never forget:

I learned that I should form connections with people, even with those who might not necessarily share my exact interests. It is important to have relationships with people if I am going to succeed working in global policy. I also learned that I should seek out people who interest me and maintain contact with them.

In addition to my relationships with other people, I learned about the importance of my relationship with myself and my career. I should always check in with myself about once a month to evaluate whether I truly enjoy where I am at in my life or if I should pursue a different path.

I learned that a career path is not always linear and that I should apply for all opportunities that interest me, even if I think that I am underqualified for them. I should find a specific area of work that I am passionate about and just go for it.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

Other students should attend the conference because meeting strong and successful women who work in the area that you are interested in empowers you and motivates you to pursue what you are passionate about. These women also have gone down different paths that they took to reach this point in their careers, so it is interesting to evaluate these paths and decide which one might work for you. You also receive information about professional opportunities that are available and not well publicized. Additionally, you have a network of people from your PLEN conference who have a shared interest in public policy and leadership, and it is always beneficial to have an additional group of connections and women to build each other up.

Does this sound like something you might be interested in? Tulane undergraduate students can apply to NCI for funding to attend PLEN conferences. Email Betsy Lopez at [elopez@tulane.edu](mailto:elopez@tulane.edu) for more information.

*Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.*