

PLEN: Women in STEM Policy

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Erica Fuller majors in public health, and is interested in a career in maternal and child health policy. She recently attended Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN)'s Women in STEM Policy seminar, thanks to a grant from Newcomb College Institute.

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

I am in my final year at Tulane University. I found my love for maternal and child health early in my Tulane career, but recently found my interest in health policy. This conference gave me the opportunity to explore my interest and truly decide whether I wanted to work within the field of health. It also gave me a chance to

make connections within D.C. that will help me launch my career.

What were your favorite parts of the conference?

My favorite part of the conference was the day we spent on Capitol Hill. I loved hearing how to incorporate scientific knowledge into politics. After hearing from panelists, I was able to meet with my congressman and advocate for an issue that I am really passionate about (reforming birth practices in the U.S.). This visit gave me insight into how to enter the field of science policy.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

Dianna Flett spoke with us early on in the conference on how to speak with confidence. Her talk really set the tone for the conference and showed us how to increase our own confidence and leverage that confidence in the workforce.

Tell us what you learned that you hope to never forget:

The United States Congress only has a few elected officials that are scientists while other countries such as China have 80% of their elected officials as scientists. When it comes to incorporating science and evidence-based solutions into policy decisions, we need to get more scientists into office and have scientists work with congressmen and congresswomen to make a change.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

The PLEN conference was an amazing experience that connected me with many students and professionals in my area of interest. It is a great opportunity to explore your interests and find out how to best enter your field.

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 for more information.

Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.