

PLEN: Women in STEM Policy

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Ellyn Frohberg studies public health and psychology, and is interested in a career in science and healthcare policy, policy research, or mental health. She recently attended Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN)'s Women in STEM Policy seminar.

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

As a student, it is easy to feel helpless in implementing substantial and sustainable change. My interest in attending the Women in STEM Policy PLEN workshop in Washington D.C. took root in my wish to streamline my goals and pinpoint what I can do to begin to create change in my community. I am increasingly interested in how policy can positively shape society, and wanted to know how I can combine my interest in science with policy that is helpful and transformative.

Through an internship at an addiction recovery center, I recognized the need for policy that helps and supports those struggling with illness inside and outside of the clinic. I also recognized public health as the conduit that can provide the framework to protect vulnerable populations and prevent illness. Furthermore, I am passionate about establishing equity within healthcare.

What were your favorite parts of the conference?

My favorite parts of the conference included the networking opportunities during site visits. Meeting with professionals at organizations such as HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) and the NIH (National Institute of Health) increased my interest in the field and helped me to establish clear and achievable short and long term goals to best suit my interests and the needs of my intended career.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

I would like to highlight the Health Resources and Services Administration and the women who graciously hosted us for the afternoon we visited. This particular office space was filled with contagious passion for helping others. Each woman brought different skills and experiences to the table that expanded my vision of how incredible and influential we each have the power to be in our future careers.

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

I hope to never forget the importance of others in building a career. A good conversation, a true connection with a stranger, or a mentor can change your life if you are open to it. Furthermore, there is room for everyone's talents. Time with peers truly is better spent in fellowship with one another rather than in competition.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

PLEN can provide the resources and connections you need to make tangible steps in determining what career path is right for you. I think, especially for STEM majors,

students are not often introduced to options outside of medical school and research. This conference introduced me to all the options I have in STEM, and how my degree can help me to advance policy. I would also like to give a huge thank you to NCI. This experience was incredible, and I am so grateful for the support and funding.

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.