

PLEN: Women in Public Policy

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Meet Emily Galik! She is a junior who is a double major in History and Political Science and a Newcomb Scholar.

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

As I am a junior, graduate school applications loom in my future and I wanted a better sense of different types of public policy careers to inform my program

choices. Also, at Tulane I have remained focused on my studies, and had not previously sought out opportunities to network. The conference provided me the opportunity to interact with professionals and peers from across the country, and begin making connections as I journey closer to the workforce.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference:

I loved the salary negotiation workshops. While the importance of salary negotiation has always been emphasized to me—especially considering the wage gap women face—no one ever gave concrete advice on how or when to negotiate. The workshops taught us strategies for such negotiation, and let us practice with each other, letting us feel out which strategies worked best for us before bringing our knowledge into the office.

I also loved spending our allotments of free time with my fellow PLEN students. One evening, a group of us went the Library of Congress to explore its resources. While we were only there for a few hours, and we did not pull any resources for in-depth research, it was amazing to explore the stacks during a low-traffic time, and see firsthand what reference material the Library deemed necessary for our legislature.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

We spent half of a day at the J. Edgar Hoover Building: the FBI headquarters! We not only heard the expected talks about careers and special programs for students and recent graduates, but also spoke with several women employees, who spanned the career spectrum from special agent to business analyst. Hearing their personal accounts humanized their professions and work environment, which is often regarded as mysterious and cold.

Detail what you learned that you hope to never forget:

I learned the importance of ‘getting coffee’ with people who have jobs you think you are interested in. Not only does this make yourself known to the professionals you speak with, but in metaphorical ‘small towns’ such as DC, it introduces you to a network that can support you in the future if you maintain your connections.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference:

While attending a leadership conference implies a cut-throat experience, that is simply not the case. PLEN fosters a supportive environment, both amongst your

peers and with the women presenting to and speaking with you. Everyone is dedicated to assisting and connecting with each other, regardless of political affiliation and profession. While it may sound cheesy, the connections you make there will likely serve you well down the road, whether you connected with one of your peers or a particular Legislative Assistant.

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.