

PLEN: Women in Public Policy

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Meet Sofie Wise! She is a senior who is interested in Public Health Policy.

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

I am a current senior and attended the conference because I am interested in pursuing a career in public health policy when I graduate. I am particularly interested in preventative medicine and Affordable Care Act maintenance policies and was hoping to gain insight into these specific topics.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference:

My favorite parts of the conference were the keynote speaker—Alice Rivlin—the skills workshops (Networking, Advocacy and Salary Negotiation) and the Policy Communications panel. I know that seems like a lot of favorites but if I could I would just say that every single panel was wonderful and inspiring. I absolutely loved the different perspectives that they brought to each category and enjoyed the fact that both sides of the aisle were represented.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

Alice Rivlin was wonderful to hear from because she is such a distinguished policy maker. She spoke about being a woman in Policy in the 1970s and how to navigate the policy world. She was interesting because she said she was never surprised or outraged by the way men treated her and attributed that to her ability to succeed. She told us that women need to stop being afraid of asking stupid questions because men are not afraid to do so and that is what gives them a leg up. I found the whole thing very inspiring and moving.

Detail what you learned that you hope to never forget:

I think the most important thing I learned at PLEN was that the next generation of policy-makers needs to start reaching across the aisle no matter how they disagree. Every single panelist and speaker told us to always be kind and never be afraid of asking for what you think you deserve. I hope I can carry these ideas with me throughout my career.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference:

Other students should attend PLEN because it instills the knowledge necessary to feel confident going after what you want. Having the skills to network and advocate for what I believe in is making my job search feel much less stressful. I am now excited about the possibilities that lie ahead, rather than anxious and unsure.

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.