

PLEN: Women in Public Policy

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Allison Buffett newcomb@tulane.edu

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Meet Allison Buffett! She is a junior who is interested in Health Care Public Policy.

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

Originally from Chicago, I am currently a junior at Tulane University studying Political Science and Public Health. Studying Political Science with a coordinate major of Social Policy and Practice, my classes often concentrate on public policy. I wanted to attend the PLEN conference because I hoped to gain a better understanding of career opportunities and post undergraduate programs relating to public policy. I also wanted to attend the PLEN conference because I wanted to grow my professional network and learn about both private and public actors in public policy.

Also, I wanted to expand my background in public health through learning more about health care public policy.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference:

While I enjoyed the entire conference, the parts of the conference that most resonated with me were the panels and speakers, the site visit, and the incredible people I met. PLEN invited impressive and inspiring speakers and panelists and always allowed time for PLEN attendees to ask questions and personally introduce themselves to the speakers, if desired. PLEN also set up site visits, which allowed attendees to visit an organization that worked with public policy. During these site visits, attendees broke into small groups and visited the assigned organization's office. The site visit allowed students to establish personal connections with professionals working at the various sites. Another part of the conference that I enjoyed was the relationships I formed with other conference attendees. The individuals who attended the conferences came from a wide range of backgrounds and had diverse experiences. The connections I made with my fellow attendees are extremely valuable to me, and I believe these friendships will continue long after the conference.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited:

For my site visit I visited the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), which is a bipartisan nongovernmental organization. This site visit was one of my favorite aspects of the PLEN conference. At the NCSL, I participated in an engaging conversation with NCSL employees. During the conversation, I learned about the importance of state legislatures and received professional advice from successful NCSL employees. I also learned about the functions of NCSL in both domestic and foreign public policy. The knowledge and skills I gained from this site visit went beyond my experiences in the classroom and validated my interest in a career in public policy.

Detail what you learned that you hope to never forget:

I hope to never forget about the career advice I received while at this conference. Specifically, I hope that I don't forget the networking and interviewing skills I received. Also, I hope to never forget that there is not just one correct pathway to professional success. The professionals that I met at the conference all took various paths to achieve their success; there is not one correct path. Further, I also learned

the importance of doing something that you believe in and are passionate about.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference:

Other students should attend a PLEN conference because it gives you an advantage as you enter the professional world. Also, the conference gives you the confidence necessary to be successful in the future. I believe that other students should attend a PLEN conference because it can help students affirm their passion and allows students to learn beyond the classroom. The conference also helps you form life long connections with students from different schools and professionals involved in careers you are interested in entering.

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.