

PLEN Conference: Women in Congress

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Christy Smith newcomb@tulane.edu

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Meet Christy Smith! She is double majoring in political science and gender and sexuality studies with a minor in history. She attended the Women in Congress PLEN conference to further develop her career interest in Congressional research.

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

I wanted to attend the PLEN conference because I wanted to learn about ways to get a first internship and first job in DC. I'm highly motivated, and I already had a career goal in mind. I wanted this conference to teach me how to get to where I wanted to be.

What were your favorite parts of the conference?

The speakers were amazing. They genuinely wanted to give us some of the insider tips on how to succeed. The PLEN staff members were invaluable. They shared stories of moving to DC and applying to entry-level jobs. They also helped me learn to read job applications. Any questions I had, they could answer. Finally, getting to move independently around DC was so helpful. We were empowered to explore the city and get to our meetings on time.

Who was your favorite speaker?

Judy Schneider was the very first speaker we had at the conference, and she gave us an overview of the functions of Congress. She challenged us to take the opportunity we had seriously. I am so glad we had her as our first speaker, because it gave me a wakeup call to really engage with the material and speakers.

What do you hope to never forget?

I hope I never forget the examples set by the speakers and the PLEN staff. They are all so dedicated and diligent. If they want something, they make it happen. Before this conference, I let myself be intimidated by applications or practical difficulties. PLEN taught me that if I want something, I need to go make it happen without giving up.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

You should attend PLEN if you want to get valuable contacts and help navigating the process of getting a job in public policy. They give you information that you otherwise would not have access to without having family or friends already in the business. They are doing great work to ensure that talented, qualified women can succeed in the public policy arena.

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.