

PLEN Conference: Women Unlocking Nonprofits

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Meet Florence Prater! She is a senior majoring in history with a minor in political science. Florence is interested in pursuing education as a career and attended the “Women Unlocking Nonprofits” PLEN conference.

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

I have spent a lot of my Tulane experience volunteering with nonprofits. Over the years, I developed a specific interest in nonprofits dealing with education through my work at the Boys and Girls Club and the Center for Restorative Approaches. I began to understand the importance of nonprofits and how they function, but I wanted to learn more about having a long term role in a nonprofit.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference.

While I am not personally interested in grants or fundraising, the women who spoke at the Grants and Fundraising portion of the seminar were incredibly engaging. Christy Carter and Jalisa Whitley highlighted the great importance of fundraising and grant-writing in running a nonprofit. They discussed how fundraising and grants relied on building and sustaining good relationships; you could tell from the way they spoke about their work that they cared deeply about the work they did, making the discussion incredibly engaging.

In addition to this portion of the seminar, the direct service seminar was incredibly meaningful. Ashley Harrell with Safe Shores and Lalaine Ricardo with Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors did an excellent job of highlighting why they love the work they do and also the challenges of working in direct service. These speakers spoke very honestly and humbly about their work, providing the audience with useful advice for working in direct service.

Who was your favorite speaker?

Nicole Cozier, Director of Diversity and Inclusion from the Human Rights Campaign, was one of the most memorable speakers for me. She provided us with a story of how she achieved her current position and incorporated her story with lessons she learned along the way. Her ability to connect her personal experiences – including some of the challenges she has faced – and develop them into lessons that we could take away from the seminar made it more applicable and memorable for me.

What do you hope to never forget?

One of the most important lessons I learned from listening to these speakers is to advocate for yourself. As a woman in the workplace, remaining confident is sometimes challenging, but it is crucial to know your skills and talents and understand why you are invaluable. Moreover, to be in a leadership role requires pursuing leadership roles actively.

Why should other students attend a PLEN Conference?

Attending this PLEN conference was an opportunity not only to listen, talk to, and learn from successful, confident women working in nonprofits, but also to connect with other awesome women in the program who share similar interests.

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.