

PLEN Conference: Women in Public Policy

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Meet Catherine Perrone! Catherine is double majoring in history and political science and attended the Women and Public Policy conference in January.

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

I am very interested in a career in public policy, especially the relationship between international and American laws and public policy. If I get accepted, my immediate plan after graduation is to join the Peace Corps' education program in Samoa in October 2016. In my final few months in the Peace Corps I will be applying to law schools in the DC area to study international law. I thought that this conference would not only open my eyes to life in public policy, but also to professional life in DC as I have never been there for a professional event other than Peace Corps office hours.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference.

I really enjoyed the meetings with my elected officials. I also enjoyed meeting new people not only from Tulane, but from all over the country. Finally, the salary negotiation was pretty useful as I have never been to a workshop like that before and it is something that I never would have thought doing on my own.

Did you have a favorite speaker or job site?

I enjoyed Alison Williams on the last day because she spoke about international issues that affect state and federal policy. This plays into my public policy interests and I really enjoyed listening to her perspective.

Further, I had an amazing meeting with one of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's legislative assistants on Agriculture. I found that meeting to actually be the PLEN highlight of the trip. It was so nice to hear someone on the federal level care so much about issues that matter; we actually sat in the café in the bottom of the senate building for an hour talking about the most recent Farm Bill and its successes and shortcomings. It was great.

What do you hope to never forget?

I've always been personable and networking has never been a problem for me. However, I do have a lot of anxiety about things I cannot control, particularly the future. That being said, hearing from countless women that changing your career isn't a big deal was pretty calming. My family members have been in their respective careers for over 10 years and I always thought that once I found a job I'd have to keep it forever. It's nice to hear that I don't.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

It's a great way to see the professional life of DC and meet people you wouldn't necessarily have crossed paths with otherwise. Friendship is very important to me and meeting so many inspiring women and making permanent friendships is a pretty great feeling. A friend who I actually met at PLEN is coming to visit for spring break this year; my PLEN connections definitely transcend the conference.

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.