

# PLEN Conference: Women in Public Policy

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Meet Sarah Bloom! She is a social policy and sociology double major interested in a career in public policy or nonprofit work, attended the Women in Public Policy seminar from January 12-16, 2016.

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

I am a senior from Chicago and was informed about the conference through a previous professor, Anna Mahoney. I have taken many political science classes and consider myself to be very politically active, however, I never considered working in

politics. I have a lot of experience in the nonprofit world — I started my own and sit on the board for another — but I never saw that work as something could lead to a profession. I wanted to attend the conference to explore the field, gain exposure to potential career paths, and practice professionalism and networking.

**Describe your favorite parts of the conference.**

I think my favorite part of the conference was hearing how all these different powerful women got to where they are. It made me realize that I do not need to be thinking about a long-term career, necessarily. It was reassuring to know that the vast majority of women had long, winding paths and most of them did not have a clear end goal in sight. With hard work, and flexibility, I have confidence that I will end up where I want to be.

**Who was your favorite speaker?**

I really enjoyed the salary negotiation speaker, Shelby Olson. She gave us a lot of concrete advice when it comes to determining one's market value. She walked us through different interview scenarios, stressing the importance of timing and appropriate communication. I believe the tips she gave me will be valuable for the rest of my professional life.

**What was your most important takeaway?**

As mentioned, I think the salary negotiation tips will be very helpful moving forward. Additionally, I think the greatest lessons I learned overlapped with all the speakers, which were to: 1) actively seek out opinions of the opposition, and 2) not pretend to know something you do not know.

**Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?**

I think PLEN is great for networking and exposure. Anyone with a slight interest will find something valuable about the conference and many end up finding connections that lead to internships and jobs. I think it is also very important to stress how cool it is to be in a room with women in male-dominated fields. Their stories are the stories of many powerful female leaders and as young women, we benefit from their life experiences.

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](mailto:elopez@tulane.edu) for more information.

*Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.*