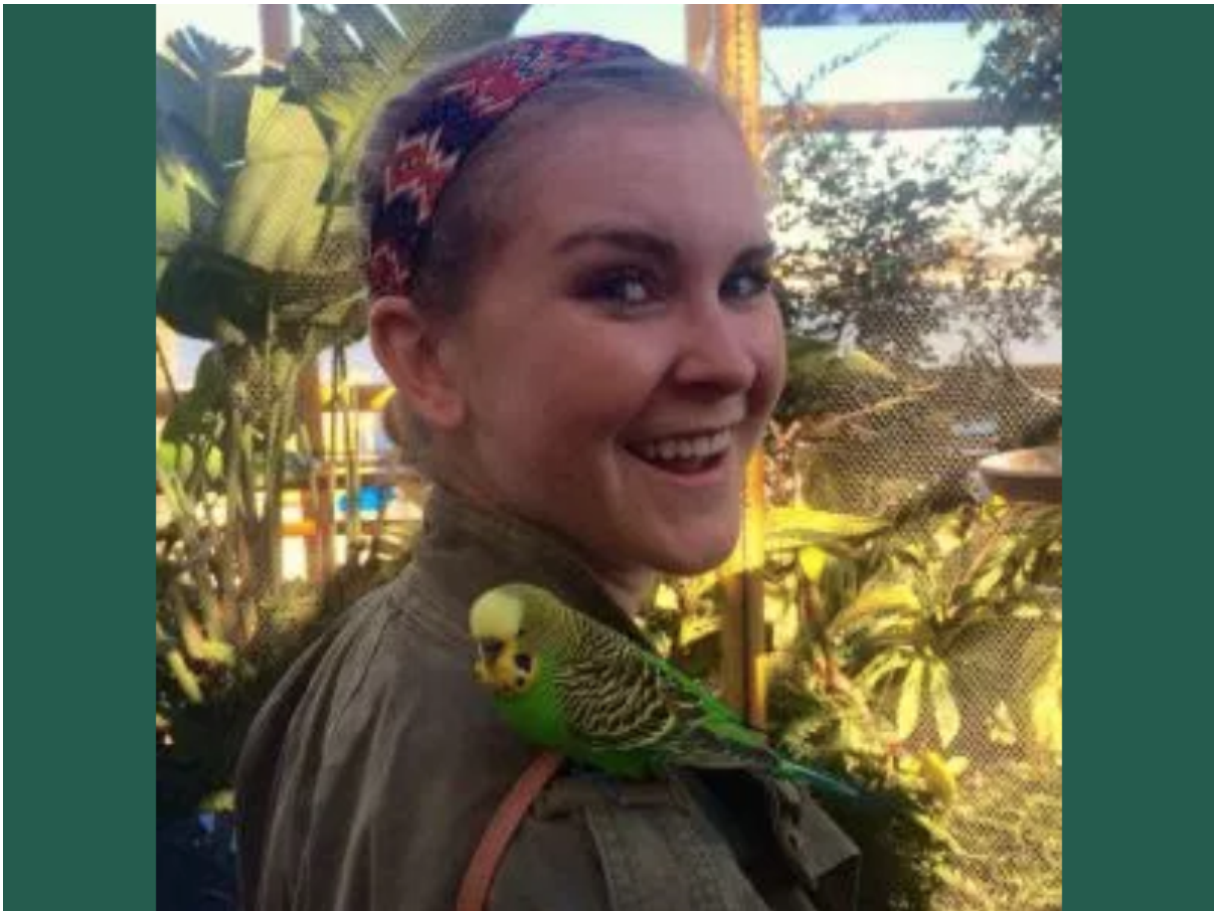


PLEN Conference: Women in STEM Policy

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Meet Emily Norris! She is an Ecology and Evolutionary Biology major who attended the Women in STEM policy seminar.

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

I love learning about the theory behind biology and the scientific process, but I wanted to learn how science is applied to impact the general public. When I saw PLEN was holding a conference on STEM Policy, I knew it would be the perfect conference to attend to learn more about how scientific research is communicated to governmental bodies and used to make a positive impact on the world around us. I also looked forward to being in an environment with other driven women who were looking to answer the same question.

Describe your favorite parts of the conference.

We heard from a tremendous amount of female speakers. My favorite part of the conference was learning about the speakers' different backgrounds and paths to where they are today. A major take-away from this conference for me was there is no single path to the career you want. Many of these powerful women did not travel a linear path to where they are today and did not know that they would end up working where they work in science policy. This was inspirational to us, since as undergraduates many of us are still questioning what we want to do in our careers.

Highlight a speaker or a job site you visited.

I was able to go with six other women to visit the Facebook DC offices. I had no idea how much work Facebook does with STEM Policy! They cover many fields, from empowering women through policy to cyber security. We toured the office and spoke to many women about their experiences working at Facebook. They offered great advice about salary negotiation, networking, and how to find a job you love. Of course, they recommended we read Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg, the current COO of Facebook. These women were not just inspiring but also extremely helpful, encouraging us to contact them if we had anything else we wanted to talk about.

What do you hope to never forget?

The PLEN conference not only worked to connect us with powerful women in DC, it also increased our confidence in ourselves and our abilities as future scientists and policy makers. I hope I never forget what PLEN taught me – that the key to making great connections, having a successful career, and making an impact is confidence. Having confidence in yourself as an employee, in your ideas, and in your abilities is key to being the best you can be. PLEN not only had us recognize our value, it also increased our confidence in networking, the job search, and our leadership abilities.

Why should other students attend a PLEN conference?

A PLEN conference is a unique experience you will not be able to get anywhere else. It puts you in contact with women you would never meet otherwise, and with incredible women your age who can be equally as inspiring. PLEN increased my confidence in myself and my abilities, it taught me how to successfully network, and gave me ideas for how I can use my skills to influence science policy. It is also a great excuse to buy business clothes if you haven't already. I had an amazing experience at PLEN, and hope Tulane can send more students to PLEN in the future.

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.