

PLEN STUDENT HANDBOOK

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History of PLEN

In the 1970s, Wells College President Frances Tarleton “Sissy” Farenthold got together with a consortium of women’s colleges to establish the Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN). These women wanted to give women students opportunities to learn leadership skills and build a professional network in DC. Our founders wanted to create an empowered women’s network. Over the last 35 years, we’ve done just that. Our alumnae have pursued successful careers in government, founded their own nonprofits and companies, and come back to inspire PLEN students to do the same.

PLEN Expectations

Respect

Respect encompasses both respect for speakers and respect for your peers. This is demonstrated by arriving on time to all events during the seminar. In Washington, DC, on time means showing up 5 to 10 minutes early. Best practice is to arrive at your location 20 minutes early then duck into a coffee shop until it’s time for you to meet your hosts.

Be sure to put away your cell phone during panels. You can tweet between panels, respond to emails and texts, or return that phone call after our speakers have finished. Most panels do not last longer than 90 minutes. If it is an emergency, please quietly leave the room.

The people you’ll hear from over the next several days – the speakers, the resume workshop reviewers, and the PLEN Board of Directors -- are all volunteers. Please thank them for their time and be respectful. Many women on these panels are carving time out of their incredibly busy schedules so we cannot stress enough that if they are on their way out of the room, remember that if you have burning questions for a speaker, you can always follow up via email.

Also be respectful when asking questions. It is okay to ask tough questions, but be mindful of the types of questions you are asking. Genuine inquiry is important, but badgering the speakers with questions is not appropriate, and will not be tolerated, under any circumstances. Please also be sure to limit yourself to one question, as your peers will also have questions to ask.

Dress

Dress in Washington, DC is conservative. This means slacks, skirts, or dresses on the bottom, button up shirts, sweaters, and jackets on the top, and limited jewelry. For shoes, you will see many women wear tennis shoes or sandals to the office then change into dress shoes once they arrive. Many women wear flats because of the amount of walking in the city.

Here is a great graphic showing the various types of office dress, depending on the office environment. There are many other sources with [visual examples](#) of dress code.¹

Business Casual vs. Professional

Have an interview or professional event coming up? Learn how to decode dress code.



Tips for Success in Any Business Situation



- 1 When in doubt, dress conservatively.
- 2 A suit (suit & tie for males) will suffice in most situations
- 3 Make sure your outfit is wrinkle-free.
- 4 Stick with solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics or simple patterns.
- 5 Accessories should be kept simple: basic pumps, modest jewelry, light make-up & light perfume.
- 6 Wear a belt and a watch.
- 7 Be sure your hair is neatly trimmed or groomed. Avoid the "messy" look.
- 8 Shirts with lettering or graphics should not be worn.
- 9 Check your outfit for missing buttons, lint, or a crooked tie.
- 10 A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers (or just above the knee for good measure).

PURDUE CCO

Here are some real world examples of business casual dress. For business casual, bright colors (right photo) and patterns (left photo) are acceptable for tops. Necklines should be mid to high; be sure undergarment straps are covered. Pants, skirts, and dresses should be solid, neutral or dark colors (e.g., black, navy, gray). Skirts should be knee-length or slightly longer. If a top is sleeveless, pair it with a sweater or blazer following the same color rules as pants, skirts, and dresses.



Here are some real world examples of business professional dress (and PLEN alumnae!). For business professional, solid colors are best for tops, as are mid to high necklines. Patterns are acceptable, but be careful that they aren't too busy. Blazers, dresses, pants, and skirts are solid, dark colors only (i.e., black, gray, brown, and navy). A light pinstripe on a dark suit is also acceptable. If your dress is sleeveless, wear a blazer or sweater.



For both business casual and professional, if you opt to wear tights with dresses or skirts, choose flesh-colored or suit colors.

Preparation

To get the most out of any class, seminar, or conference, preparation is key. Research the speakers and the topics so that you can come prepared with questions. We've provided the speakers' bios to aid in your preparation.

Resume - if you don't have one, make one (you'll need something for the resume-editing workshop at PLEN). You can find resume examples and templates online, but make sure you customize yours! Some things to keep in mind when creating it: check formatting for consistency, make sure you have white space (it is difficult to read a wall of text), and use action verbs to describe your work experience. If you don't have much experience, don't worry! Use your extracurricular activities to fill in the gaps.

LinkedIn - This is a professional online networking website. Create an account. It's free!

Business Cards - it's a good idea to bring a few of these, too. You never know what opportunities might arise, and a resume is often too cumbersome to carry around and hand out. You can make your own business cards on Microsoft Word, or you can purchase them from sites like VistaPrint.

What PLEN Can Do for You

- 1. You get out what you put in!** Everyone at PLEN--staff and volunteers--is here to make sure you get the most out of your short time here. Realize that your PLEN experience will be what you make of it--we give you the environment and provide you access to professionals, but students who have been the most successful at these seminars have done the legwork in advance. They come prepared with questions at each panel and take time to introduce themselves to staff, volunteers, board members, and speakers. After the seminar, they follow-up with thank you letters and emails. (Handwritten letters are especially appreciated by our speakers.) Successful participants make the most of the time that they are given!
- 2. Speaker biographies:** Please carefully read the speaker biographies and prepare questions in advance. Not only is it respectful, but it is helpful in making a good impression!

- 3. There is no such thing as a 'silly' question.** Most of our panels will cover a mix of topical information about a specific policy issue and professional development discussion. The speakers will share advice with you about how you can have a career similar to their own. The last 15 to 20 minutes of each session is reserved for open Q&A. Please use it to ask questions of all panelists. There truly is no reason not to ask a question. If you are confused or want to know more, more than likely someone else here does as well.

Washington, DC Primer

Culture

"Washington is a city of Southern efficiency and Northern Charm." - President John F. Kennedy

Ask anyone on the street to describe the Washington, DC culture and you will get a different answer from every person, but there will be some commonalities. Washington, DC is a big city with a small city feel. There are 658,000 people within the District of Columbia and thousands more that commute in every day. It is not unusual to run into someone you know while walking down the street.

It is also a very transient city. Due to the political nature of the town, many people work based on the political cycle so they are here for two to four years.

Brunch is an event in DC. Everyone has their favorite spots, but it is often a multi-hour affair starting midday on Saturday or Sunday. It includes traditional brunch fare, like eggs benedict or French toast, but often also includes culinary experiments. Most neighborhoods have a few [hidden gems](#), if you're looking to avoid a crowd.ⁱⁱ² Be sure to check whether they take reservations!

DC Intern Guide

It is often said that Washington DC runs on interns. LinkTank has posted a series of blog posts about the intern experience ([Part 1](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, [Part 2](#)^{iv}, [Part 3](#)^v, & [Part 4](#)^{vi}).

Learning the Language

Here are a few commonly used words and phrases you may hear from panelist and around Washington DC.

Amicus Brief (or Curiae)

Latin for "friend of the court." Frequently, a person or group who is not a party to a lawsuit, but has a strong interest in the matter, will petition the court for permission to submit a brief in the action with the intent of influencing the court's decision.

Example: The organization files an Amicus Brief to the Supreme Court ahead of the Obamacare trial.

Appropriations

Two of the most powerful Committees on Capitol Hill are the Senate and House Appropriations Committees because they have jurisdiction over all discretionary spending legislation. The Committees decide how the Treasury spends its money.

Caucus

A caucus is a meeting of supporters or members of a specific political party or movement.

Coalition

An alliance between multiple bodies created to complete an action or a like-minded goal.

Earmarks

A congressional directive that directs approved funds to be spent on specific projects.

Entitlements

A government program guaranteeing access to some benefit based on established rights or by legislation.

Examples: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid

Federal Budget (Mandatory Spending, Discretionary Spending)

In United States fiscal policy, mandatory spending is spending on certain programs that are required by existing law (Social Security). Discretionary spending is spending on programs that are not required by existing law (Federal Work Study).

Fiscal Year

A period year used to calculate annual financial statements.

Inside the Beltway

Geographically, “inside the beltway” refers to the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area, as well as those areas of Virginia and Maryland that lie within the perimeter of the Capital Beltway, such as Alexandria and Bethesda. However, this term is also frequently used to characterize matters that have primary importance to key members of the federal government, such as federal lobbyists, contractors, congressmen and women, and even the corporate media.

K Street

The K Street area is famous in D.C. for being a center for numerous think-tanks, lobbyists, and advocacy groups. When someone in D.C. hears “K-Street”, the first thing that comes to mind is lobbying.

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

Advocacy is public support for or a recommendation of a particular cause or policy. Lobbying is a specific advocacy technique. It is defined as soliciting or trying to influence the votes of members of a legislative body. There are two types of lobbying: direct lobbying, which is when a communication is directed at a government employee referring to and expressing an opinion about specific legislation, and grassroots lobbying, which is when a communication is directed to the general public referring to and expressing an opinion about specific legislation.

Examples:

- An organization organizes a rally in front of the Capitol in favor of universal health care. This is an advocacy strategy of the organization but is not lobbying because there is no reference or expression of opinion regarding a specific piece of legislation.
- The same organization decides to send delegates to Capitol Hill the same day as the rally to meet with the Communications Director of a Californian Senator to express support for the Affordable Care Act. This is direct lobbying, an advocacy strategy of the

organization, because there is reference and expression of opinion regarding a specific piece of legislation to a government employee.

Mandate (Funded, Unfunded)

A funded mandate is when the federal government gives states money to perform a mandatory action. An unfunded mandate is a statute or regulation that requires a state or local government to perform certain actions without assisted funding.

Markups

The process by which congressional committees debate, amend, and rewrite legislation.

Nonprofit Sector

Also known as the Independent Sector, this sector comprises of 25 different categories of organizations that are exempt from federal income taxes. The most common category is the 501(c)(3), which is the category for charitable organizations.

Off-the-Record

An unofficial statement; any statement that is not to be made public or attributed to a specific entity or person.

****IMPORTANT****

- All PLEN panelists and speakers, while at the conference, are acting off the record. This means that you may not video or circulate any information they provide to you, nor may you directly quote them on ANY media (social or otherwise) platforms OR academic writings!!

PAC (Political Action Committee)

A fund that raises money for from employees to support candidates running for Congress.

Private Sector

The private sector is that part of the economy which is run by private individuals or groups, usually as a means of enterprise for profit. Examples include businesses and factories.

Public Policy

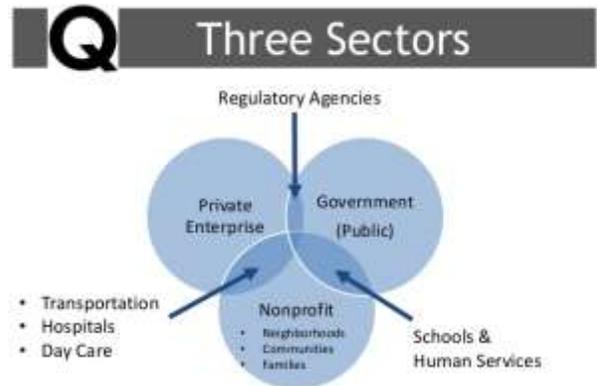
Laws, actions of the government, regulations, attitudes, cultural ideals, or accepted rules.

Public Sector

The part of the economy concerned with providing various government services is known as the private sector. Examples include the military, the police, urban planning, various social programs, and more.

SME

A Subject Matter Expert is someone who is an authority in a particular field or area of study. For example, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology regularly employs the



<http://image.slidesharecdn.com/nonprofitgovernance-150213125909-conversion-gate01/95/nonprofit-governance-basics-2-638.jpg?cb=1423832480>

expertise of SMEs when discussing legislation on climate change. In this particular situation, these people are often researchers or professors.

Think Tank

Also known as a policy or research institute, think tanks perform research and advocacy on topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics, technology, and more.

Examples: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_think_tanks

Trade Association

Organization that represents similar organizations/non-governmental entities.

White Paper

A white paper is a report or guide informing readers in a concise manner about a complex issue and presenting the issuing organization's view on the matter. It is meant to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision.

Example: The organization that organized the rally and lobbying delegation wants participants to be well prepared and properly enthused about the issue so they release a white paper about Obamacare before the day of the event.

Wonk

Wonks are known for having a steel-trap mind when it comes to certain policy issues. People that pretend to know a vast amount about an issue but actually don't are called hacks. Neither are particularly nice things to call someone. Calling someone a wonk is similar to calling someone a nerd.

Getting Around

Washington, DC is laid out in four quadrants: northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. The center of the grid is the U.S. Capitol building. We spend the majority of our time in the northwest. If you stop to ask for directions, it is important to specify which quadrant. If you don't, you may end up far from your final destination, or may not be able to find it at all.



Image from: <http://www.weichert.com/images/states/DC.gif>

There is also a system to the street names. Streets running north-south are numbered, and those running east-west are lettered. However, they skipped a few letters - J, X, Y, and Z. After the letters, the alphabet starts over with words. First it is one-syllable words, then two, then three syllables until the Maryland state line. There are diagonal streets cutting through the city and those are often named after states. There's a [Wikipedia article](#) that explains this all in more detail if you are interested.^{vii}



- Most people get around the city by taking metro, bus, or taxi. You will be primarily using the metro, so here are a few hints to make it go as smoothly as possible:
- When using escalators, be sure to **stand on the right side**. If you want to walk up the escalator, then use the left side, but be sure you want to walk all the way up.
 - You will need your metrocard (SmarTrip) to get in and out of the metro stations.
 - Download the Metro app (for [iPhone](#) or [Android](#)) on your phone to get a system map, arrival times, and alerts.
 - Before you leave any location, we strongly encourage you to use phones and maps to figure out where you are going.

Image from: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CEvZz85VEAAPDRK.jpg:large>

Restaurants and Dining

Washington, DC has a variety of food options from food trucks to five-star restaurants. Sometimes it can feel difficult to find a place to eat that won't break your budget. Below are some staff favorites.

Food Trucks - These range from \$5 to \$15 and can be found during lunch time at most major parks in downtown. There are over 200 food trucks registered in Washington DC ranging from French to Vietnamese, Cajun to Persian, and everything in between. Since the trucks stop at different locations every day, check out the website www.foodtruckfiesta.com for a map of what truck is near you.

Fast Food - You can find staples like Chipotle and Starbucks in Washington, DC but there are a lot of alternatives as well. Below is a short list of places that will generally run \$10 to \$15 per meal.

Asian		Sandwiches & Salads	
	Grand Trunk Pei Wei Shop House Teaism		Au Bon Pain Chop't Potbelly Pret A Manger SweetGreen

Mexican		Coffee & Bakery	
	California Tortilla Chipotle District Taco Lime Surfside Taco The Well Dressed Burrito		Baked & Wired Crumbs & Whiskers The Coupe Dangerously Delicious Pies Firehook Bakery Georgetown Cupcakes Sprinkles Cupcakes Tryst
Italian		Other	
	&pizza DC Pizza Noodles & Company		Cava Grill Nandos Roti Mediterranean Grill

Restaurants - As with any city these range in price and quality. Below are a few of the staff favorites by neighborhood. All are accessible by metro and cost ratings are from Yelp.

Dupont Circle		
Circa at Dupont	\$\$	Polished bistro with creative New American fare, a heated patio, and plenty of wines and cocktails www.circaatdupont.com
Tortilla Coast	\$	Tex-Mex cantina www.tortillacoast.com
Hank's Oyster bar	\$\$	New England-style seafood outpost with clams, lobster rolls, a raw bar, and daily specials. www.hanksoysterbar.com
Firefly	\$\$	Restaurant built around a large indoor tree, serving seasonal, local, New American comfort food. www.firefly-dc.com
Chinatown		
Matchbox	\$\$	Gourmet pizza and New American bistro fare www.matchboxrestaurants.com
Absolute Thai	\$\$	Thai staples like curries and noodles plus lunch specials are served at this sunny restaurant. www.absolutethairestaurantdc.com

Busboys & Poets	\$\$	Lively neighborhood haunt servings as a bookstore, coffee shop, and restaurant focused on global fare www.busboysandpoets.com
Gordon Biersch	\$\$	Restaurant with pub fare and microbrews www.gordonbiersch.com
District of Pi	\$\$	Eco-friendly bar with deep-dish and thin-crust specialty pizzas. www.pi-dc.com
Metro Center		
Corner Bakery	\$	A cafe offering a menu of sandwiches, pasta, and pastries. www.cornerbakerycafe.com
Noodles on 11th	\$\$	Casual Pan-Asian Restaurant serving pho soups, Hong-Kong style noodles, curries, and more. www.noodleson11.com
Sushi AOI	\$\$	Colorful spot serving rolls, vegetarian entrees and noodle dishes, with a happy hour. www.thesushiaoi.com
Le Pain Quotidien	\$\$	Classic light fare and organic breads fill out the menu at this rustic-chic cafe and bakery chain. www.lepainquotidien.us
Capitol Hill - Capitol South Metro or Eastern Market Metro		
Ted's Bulletin	\$\$	This is a DC icon. They make homemade pop-tarts that are delicious. www.tedsbulletin.com
Cava Mezze	\$\$	Tapas-style Greek dining. www.cavamezze.com
Hawk and Dove	\$\$	Farm fresh, upscale pub grub, plus brews & wine turned out in spacious, industrial-chic surrounds www.hawkdovedc.com
Bullfeathers	\$\$	Longtime tavern supplying draft beer and pub grub to crowds of lobbyists and Hill staffers www.bullfeathersdc.net

Professional Development Resources

Resume Resources

Building and tailoring your resume can be an overwhelming and intimidating process. Check out these resources to help clarify the process:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/719/1/>

<http://www.resume-resource.com/executive-assistant-resume-example/>

Interview Skills

Interview skills can be incredibly difficult to practice on your own. However, many colleges and universities have career centers that will offer (for free) several different interview practice scenarios. Stop by your school's career center to see what kind of services they offer!

Goal Setting

We all know that goal-setting is an important aspect of career development, but reaching those goals isn't always the difficult part. In fact, for many people setting goals is infinitely more challenging. One tool you can use to help develop your goals is the SMART model. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. A SMART goal will adhere to each of these parameters. Check out the graphic to get a better grasp on the SMART model.

Setting SMART Goals

The research shows that specific and challenging goals lead to better performance (Locke, 1968). In this lesson we will be working on designing a plan and creating SMART goals to help us achieve a healthier lifestyle.

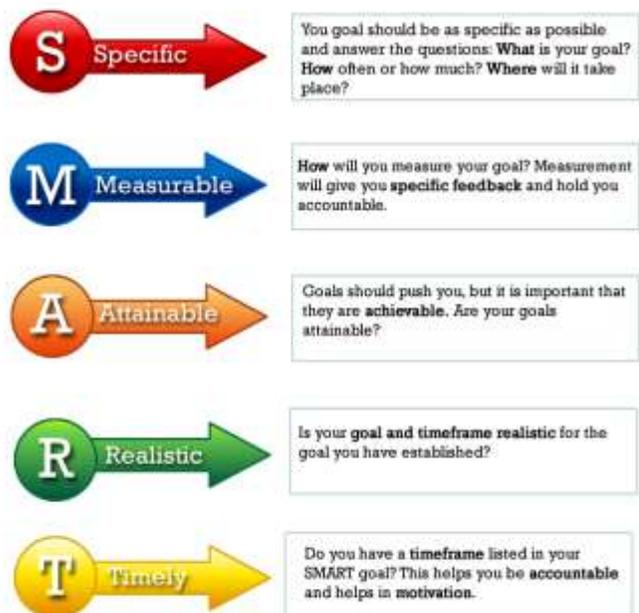


Image from: www.hr.virginia.edu/.../Writing_SMART_Goals.pdf

Professional Organizations

Networking and professional organizations are a great way to meet like-minded women (and men, depending on the organization) and form long-lasting professional and personal connections. In a way, these are kind of like PLEN seminars on a larger scale. Plus, they're a great way to get out and have some fun, while advancing your career! While there are many of these, here are a few to get you started.

American Association for the Advancement of Science ([AAAS](#))

The AAAS seeks to "advance science, engineering, and innovation throughout the world for the benefit of all people."^{viii}

DC Society of Young Professionals ([DCYoungPro](#))

Membership organization that holds and hosts events for young professionals in the DC Metro area.

Executive Women's Roundtables ([EWR](#))

Membership organization that "provide[s members] with the information and exceptional connections to people and programs that will help [those members] achieve business success."^{ix}

[Ladies DC](#)

"Ladies DC... is the founding chapter of Ladies America, a national network of young professional women connecting to advance one another personally and professionally. The goal of Ladies DC is to attract extraordinary women who have a real desire to succeed and also be part of a community here in the nation's capital and nationwide through Ladies America."^x

Network of Enlightened Women ([NeW](#))

"NeW educates young women on conservative values, cultivates a community in which to discuss and strengthen these values, and emboldens young women to speak out on campus and in their communities. NeW is educating and training the next generation of conservative women leaders."^{xi}

Success in the City ([SITC](#))

"Success in the City (SITC) is an executive women's organization for smart, unique, and driven women. We are a community focused on celebrating women's success and accomplishments and providing a rich network of shared experiences, and professional resources."^{xii}

Women Building and Investing Success ([WBIS](#))

"WBIS is a network of dedicated and results-oriented business women, simply helping women build strategic alliances and increase the net worth of your business."^{xiii}

Women in Government Relations ([WGR](#))

"Women in Government Relations is dedicated to advancing and empowering women by fostering professional development and growth opportunities through a community that supports women's leadership in government relations."^{xiv}

Women's High Tech Coalition ([WHTC](#))

"The Women's High-Tech Coalition is a non-profit... non-partisan organization that promotes the exchange of ideas among leaders in the public and private sectors whose focus is technology, innovation and the development of public policy related to technology."^{xv}

Women's Information Network ([WIN](#))

"The Women's Information Network (WIN) is Washington's premier professional, political, and social network dedicated to empowering young, Democratic, pro-choice women."^{xvi}

Women in Technology ([WIT](#))

"As the premier professional association for women in the technology industry, our community offers a broad range of support, programs and resources to advance women in technology from the classroom to the boardroom."^{xvii}

[Women's Policy, Inc.](#)

"WPI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose sole focus is to help ensure that the most informed decisions on key women's issues are made by policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels."^{xviii}

Washington Women in Public Relations ([WWPR](#))

"Washington Women in Public Relations (WWPR) is a member-based professional society cultivating and inspiring female communicators to reach their full potential in the DC market and beyond."^{xix}

Young Consultants of DC ([YCDC](#))

"YCDC unites young professionals in the greater Washington D.C. area through community service, educational, and professional networking events, providing members the opportunity to strengthen their network, foster professional development, and enrich the community."^{xx}

Young Nonprofit Professionals Network ([YNPN](#))

"YNPNdc is a community of inspired professionals equipped to lead a diverse and evolving nonprofit sector. YNPNdc advances the careers of young professionals to strengthen the nonprofit sector."^{xxi}

Young Professionals in International Affairs ([YPIA](#))

"YPIA facilitates a common forum and safe space to discuss diverse international issues. In addition to regular discussions, we also coordinate cultural exchanges, international cuisine events, author presentations, social/professional networking events, and guest lectures."^{xxii}

Young Professionals in Foreign Policy ([YFPF](#))

"YFPF's mission is to foster the next generation of foreign policy leaders by providing young professionals with the knowledge, skills, exposure, and relationships to tackle critical global challenges over the course of their careers."^{xxiii}

Younger Women's Task Force ([YWTF](#))

Younger Women's Task Force is a division of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), which "is the nation's leading voice promoting equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research."^{xxiv}

International Women's Organizations

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. <http://www.unwomen.org/>

Girl Up is an innovative campaign of the United Nations Foundation. The campaign gives American girls the opportunity to become global leaders and channel their energy

and compassion to raise awareness and funds for United Nations programs that help some of the world's hardest-to-reach adolescent girls. <http://www.girlup.org/>

Vital Voices' mission is to identify, invest in and bring visibility to extraordinary women around the world by unleashing their leadership potential to transform lives and accelerate peace and prosperity in their communities. <http://www.vitalvoices.org/>

Internship and Job Resources

You will hear it mentioned by everyone in DC: network, network, network. You have started on this important step already by attending PLEN, but it's up to you to maintain these relationships.

While networking is both important and very helpful, you can still find an internship or job on your own. There are many resources available. Below are a few resources to get you started:

Job Boards

Democratic GAIN: www.democraticgain.org

Conservative Jobs: www.conservativejobs.com

Careerealism: www.careerealism.com

Indeed: www.Indeed.org

Idealist: www.idealist.org

USA Jobs: www.usajobs.gov

Want to work on the Hill?

US Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/employment/po/positions.htm>

US House (visit link to sign up for email list):

http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/members_and_committees.php

Temp Agencies

Careers in Nonprofit Staffing

Politemps

Think Tanks

<http://washingtoncenter.ucr.edu/ThinkTanks.pdf>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_think_tanks_in_the_United_States

<http://blog.linktank.com/most-popular-think-tanks/2/>

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- ^{vii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streets_and_highways_of_Washington,_D.C.
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