

Internship offers exposure to real politics and activism

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Senior Nicolette Guillou knows how to make the most of an opportunity. After a brief meeting on campus last fall, she developed an ongoing relationship with the president of the National Organization for Women, Terry O'Neill. A mentoring relationship blossomed, and this summer Guillou is interning at NOW, serving as assistant to the president.



Terry O'Neill, at podium, president of the National Organization for Women, speaks at a Washington, D.C., event promoting the Violence Against Women Act, as Tulane senior Nicolette Guillou, at rear in middle, stands by. Guillou is an intern on O'Neill's staff. (Photo from U.S. Congress)

[O'Neill](#) visited Tulane last October to discuss the impact of the current economic crisis on women, and she also met with the Newcomb College Institute's Women in Politics group. After meeting the activist, Guillou was inspired to work on a case study of O'Neill's election as NOW leader for the [Newcomb Scholars'](#) "Women Leading Change" seminar.

Guillou contacted O'Neill, who was “incredibly gracious when I told her about the case I was writing, and let me ask some tough questions during an hour-long phone interview about her experiences.”

The two kept in touch, and met again at a conference in Washington, D.C., in January. When Guillou expressed an interest in working with NOW, O'Neill offered the job, exposing the student to the real work of politics.

“I have rallied with NOW to pass the Senate version of VAWA (Violence Against Women Act.) I've been there with Terry as she met with chiefs of staff, hosted press conferences and plotted strategies to simultaneously strengthen her organization and the women's movement as a whole.”

Guillou's commitment to women's empowerment translates to on-campus involvement in student organizations like VOX: Voices for Planned Parenthood and the Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education.

O'Neill, a 1980 graduate of Tulane Law School, serves as an example for her intern's own activism. “After seeing her schedule, I will never complain about being 'too busy' again!” Guillou said. “I admire her tenacity and vision, and feel more confident in returning to campus as a feminist leader this fall.”

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