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A voice for change



Northeastern student Chelsie Ouellette worked on co-op at the White House in the Office of Media Affairs. Courtesy photo.

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For Chelsie Ouellette, working at the White House was a life-altering experience, a glimpse at the heights a political communications career could take her in the future.

Ouellette, a **communication studies** major, worked in the Office of Media Affairs from early January through May, handling dozens of media inquiries daily from outlets nationwide and directing them to the appropriate contacts. Working alongside a bustling communications team, she also pitched op-eds and satellite TV interviews with Obama administration officials to the media as part of a collaborative effort to get President Barack Obama's message

out to the public.

The **experiential learning** opportunity also put her front and center in the nation's capital during the fiery debate over and ultimate passage of the landmark health-care bill. Given the legislation's significance, Ouellette quickly grasped how much every news story mattered to the bill's success or failure, and the energy her colleagues brought to the effort inspired her to do the same.

"You work really hard because this is the ultimate place to work for our field of political communication," said Ouellette, who begins her senior year in the fall. "It doesn't get any better than that. I had a remarkable experience."

The White House program also included a community service component. Ouellette's work involved interacting with District of Columbia-area high school students on their own school service projects. Connecting with and motivating the students was hard work, but her role as a service project leader ultimately afforded her the opportunity to meet President Obama in person.

It was during her first co-op in Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick's press office that Ouellette initially developed a passion for political communications, explaining that she saw first-hand how extraordinary efforts to develop policy can bring about change. Now Ouellette is working in the governor's reelection campaign, as a scheduling and operations coordinator.

While her new role allows her to step away from the relentless 24-hour news cycle, Ouellette said she hopes to remain in political communications after she graduates next May.

"It's very rewarding when you're representing something you believe in," she said.

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