

# ON TOP OF THE WORLD ON CAPITOL HILL:



JESSYE FLANNERY '13

by Brianna Furey '15



**W**hile most students at Gustavus followed this fall's election through computer and television screens, political science major Jessye Flannery '13 has had an up close and personal experience with politics thanks to a semester-long internship in the very heart of the nation's political system, Washington, D.C.

Flannery is completing an internship through the Washington Internship Institute (WII), and is placed with the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP Committee) in the Education Policy Office for Chairman Tom Harkin, a Senator from Iowa, Flannery's home state. While working at her internship site four days a week, Flannery also attends classes one day a week through the WII.

"Several professors in the political science department encouraged me to study in D.C. for a semester," Flannery said. "If it weren't for them I probably would not be in Washington right now."

Professor Richard Leitch was one faculty member who pushed Flannery to explore internship options off campus.

"I tell all students and advisees they should study off campus for at least one semester," Leitch said. "Jessye learns quickly and she is also enthusiastic about learning, blessed with an abundance of energy, and is a great representative of Gustavus."

Flannery's daily duties include compiling daily news clips on

education for committee staffers twice a week, greeting guests and answering phone calls at the front desk, and assisting committee staffers with research on education policies.

"I work quite frequently with issues dealing with higher education policies. Staffers will send me research studies, press releases, and bills and I am responsible for writing memorandums summarizing the information. I also attend hearings, briefings, and panels regarding education and write memorandums on what was presented for staff members that were unable to attend," Flannery said.

Since starting the internship this fall, Flannery has had a few notable experiences.

"I was able to accompany Senator Harkin to the floor of the Senate one day to hear him speak about education funding. That has been one of the highlights of my internship," Flannery said. "Also, in September the HELP Committee held a hearing on college affordability. I was able to help assemble booklets for the committee

and then attend the hearing, so that was another highlight of my experience so far."

Gustavus's faculty representative for the WII program, Professor of Political Science Chris Gilbert, believes the program is an excellent internship opportunity where students discover that the skills and knowledge they learn at Gustavus are useful in the real world. They also learn how to better apply their skills and knowledge and typically come back as better speakers, writers and time managers. Flannery's experiences confirm this.

"I am able to complete many of the tasks I am asked to do because of the classes I've taken at Gustavus. I am able to read research studies and summarize the information into memorandums for staff members," Flannery said. "My internship in Washington has shown me I have learned a tremendous amount about politics, research, interpreting research, and writing. I have also been able to work with bills I studied in classes at Gustavus during my internship. It's exciting working with the people who make policies I've studied in class."

Flannery's time in Washington will also impact her class work when she returns to Gustavus for Spring Semester.

"I have one semester left before I graduate and next semester I'm taking Professor Kate Knutson's senior seminar Interest Groups in American Politics class," Flannery said. "I have been able to see the role interest groups play in the legislative process and so this experience will help me while writing my senior thesis."

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Looking beyond graduation, Flannery sees the work she is doing at her internship as a possible career path. She hopes to one day work in public policy, either for the government or the private sector, in a job specifically related to policy and the legislative branch of government.

"I love working on the Hill. While I work for a committee I also work closely with Senator Harkin's personal office staff so I am able to observe many different positions on Capitol Hill," Flannery said. "This experience has opened my eyes to new career opportunities. There are many jobs in government relating to policy and the legislative branch, many of which I did not learn about prior to this internship."

With her future career plans in mind, Flannery is using her internship as an opportunity to network as much as possible and enjoys meeting the many new people she encounters every day.

"In D.C. the saying 'it isn't about what you know, but who you know' is especially true. It is easy to make connections with people in D.C.," Flannery said. "When I meet someone new I always like to ask them how they ended up in D.C. It's fascinating to hear the different paths people take in order to work in D.C. It's a city where people change jobs frequently and most people have interesting stories on how they ended up in the job they currently have."

Faculty, staff and fellow students who know Flannery say they won't be surprised to see her excel in whatever she does after Gustavus.

"Jessye is a terrific student. She participates all the time and is just clearly very motivated to learn more about politics," Professor Gilbert said. "The WII was a perfect fit for her to get some real world professional experience. I know she has benefited greatly and will bring back to campus a much deeper knowledge and understanding of the political process."

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