



Samantha Braun

Samantha Braun is from New York City and a Political Science major. Electoral politics is her form of civic engagement. During high school, she interned in the office of a New York City Councilman and during her years at Penn, she has worked for Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City, U.S. Senator Robert Casey from Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State Representative Babette Josephs from Philadelphia. Sami is interested in public policy issues, particularly with regard to the financing of medical care and has served with the Concord Coalition, a non-profit organization in Washington D.C that focuses on the growing federal budget deficits. In Philadelphia, Samantha has also worked in local schools to structure recess programs and provide college counseling. She was the Treasurer of the Student Committee on Undergraduate Education (SCUE), a branch of student government focused on Penn's academic policies. She will continue to pursue her interests in politics after graduation by serving in a staff position in a congressional campaign in New York State during the 2012 election.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Civic Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania: The Relationship between Pre-Professionalism and Civic Development in Undergraduate Campus Culture

Faculty Advisor: Mary Summers, School of Arts & Sciences, Robert A. Fox Leadership Program

The University of Pennsylvania often sells itself to prospective students and alumni as an institution of higher learning that prioritizes civic engagement with local, national and global communities. This capstone project explores the concern that several cultural and institutional factors at Penn work against its declared mission of promoting engagement. It examines whether there are certain features of Penn's undergraduate culture that dissolve student interest in social service and advocacy work over the course of their undergraduate years. The capstone project raises questions regarding the relationship between pre-professionalism and civic engagement from the perspective of the author and interviews with a number of students who chose to participate in PennCORP, a civic engagement pre-orientation program for in-coming freshmen. Based on her experiences, she suspected that the culture of pre-professionalism, the on-campus job recruiting (OCR) process, and participation in Greek organizations are among the most influential aspects of student life that discourage students from ongoing civic engagement. Her interviewees, for the most part, identified these same factors as discouraging students from sustained service activity. She concluded that pre-professionalism at Penn dominates campus culture, and is detrimental to the University's declared commitment to the promotion of civic engagement.