

Day, Sarah – SD

The United States Senate Youth Program was a life-changing experience for me. I would like to express my gratitude to the Hearst Foundation, Rayne Guilford, Lynn DeSmet, and the rest of the USSYP staff for all their hard work, as well as their kindness towards the delegates. Without your confidence in our abilities, the success of this year's program would not be possible. I know I am not the first delegate who has put this thought into perspective, and I suspect that I will certainly not be the last.

Meeting President Barack Obama was a dream come true for me. The fact that I was lucky enough to get to ask him a question makes me feel incredibly fortunate. It was surreal and inspiring experience, and I am so grateful for that opportunity.

I also thoroughly enjoyed our time with Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor. She connected well with us in two main ways: 1) her appointment was recent, so we had experienced this piece of history less than a year before our meeting, and 2) she was enthusiastic and down-to-earth. The overwhelming impression among the delegates after our hour with her was extremely positive.

In addition to those two amazing experiences, my next favorite speaker was Meera Shankar, the Indian Ambassador to the United States. As a lover of different cultures, I was fascinated with her speech. She sparked my interest in India, especially politically. I also admired her charisma, composure, and stature as a foreign diplomat. She was an excellent role model for aspiring diplomats like myself.

The United States Senate Youth Program was a pivotal experience for me. My aspirations and ambitions have grown stronger than I could have ever imagined. In terms of personality, I find myself more calm and composed in all aspects of life. The speakers, my fellow delegates, and the USSYP staff have demonstrated for me the value of taking the high road. It is the classy way to approach life and creates relationships based on respect.

It is the relationships with my fellow delegates that makes Washington Week such a valuable experience for me. We were brought together based on testing, essays, and interviews. I was immediately impressed by not only our group's collective intellectual prowess, but also our unrelenting, and often aggressive, curiosity. Our love of government broke the ice between us, creating the potential for friendships. This potential was fostered quickly as a result of our shared interests combined with our shared experience of Washington Week. What was even more important, however, was the admirable traits all of the delegates shared.

I have never been around a group where every single person was intelligent, driven, passionate, polite, articulate, charismatic, classy, friendly, and an all around incredible human being. I have established deeper connections with my fellow delegates than I ever thought possible. Personally, I believe I have become a better person through this entire experience; I give a large amount of credit for this development to the USSYP Class of 2010. My friendships through this program are ones I will continually strive to keep close. The environment of USSYP has solidified my future goals in public service. If I would be working with people like my fellow delegates, I am confident the future will be brighter. For that, I am thankful to the USSYP and its wonderful staff.