

When I arrived at the University at Albany (UAlbany) four years ago I felt many different emotions; I was scared, excited, nervous, eager, homesick, and all of the other feelings that come with moving away from home and going to college. I was unsure how I would adjust to this massive change, but I was sure of one thing: I wanted to study political science and ultimately work in government. Given my interest in politics and career aspirations, I joined the College Democrats during the first few weeks of classes. I was starting to settle into the college atmosphere and make friends outside of my residence hall.

Looking back, this seemingly small event—joining the College Democrats—was such a critical moment in my life. It motivated me to get involved outside of the classroom, to socialize with other students who shared similar interests, and it helped me connect with students who, unbeknownst to me, would serve as mentors in my college career. I looked up to the leaders of the UAlbany College Democrats as examples of *who* and *what* I wanted to be. I wanted to be someone who serves others, who works to make real change, and I wanted to be a part of something “bigger” than myself. At the end of the first semester of my freshman year, I was elected to serve as the Communications Director of the UAlbany College Democrats.

This was the beginning of my leadership experiences at UAlbany. From Communications Director of the UAlbany College Democrats, I was elected to serve as the New Media Director of the College Democrats of New York, and appointed to serve as the National Web Design Coordinator of the College Democrats of America, all before my sophomore year began. *It felt surreal.* Though I was rising quickly, these titles were not what I was most proud of; rather, it was what I was able to contribute to these organizations that excited me most. I was able to participate in *real* discussions about the direction and leadership of the College

Democrats at a local, state, and national level. I was right on track for a career in government, but without knowing it, my involvement at UAlbany was leading me down another path.

In addition to my leadership experience in the College Democrats, I was elected to serve as the Vice President of the Student Association at the end of my Sophomore year. This is where my interest in higher education and student affairs began. I had regular meetings with the Vice President for Student Success in her office where we would discuss a varying range of topics, anything from the return of Fountain Day, a school tradition and student-favorite event, to rational tuition and imposing new “campus life” fees on students. In these meetings, I further developed my capacity for leadership. As a 20 year old college student, I had to be able to articulate my viewpoints effectively, efficiently, and respectfully. I developed the ability to strongly disagree with someone while still being able to smile and laugh at the end of the discussion. Most importantly, I had to consider the opinions, experiences, and values of the nearly 13,000 undergraduate students enrolled in UAlbany. I wasn’t only representing myself in these meetings, I was representing the student body.

During my time as Vice President I was able to implement a number of policies that directly served my constituents, the student body. I’m most proud of helping to create an \$18,000 Student Association scholarship fund that will be awarded annually to both student leaders on campus as well as students who need further financial assistance. In addition, I also provided leadership on the Student Association’s annual Spring concert and Fall speaker series, two programs which enrich the quality student life at UAlbany. I maximized my time as Vice President by implementing successful short-term initiatives, like the Spring concert, and long-term initiatives, like the student scholarships.

These leadership experiences help display my vision of and capacity for leadership. They illustrate my dedication to the various roles I've had and will have in the future. Part of my interest and excitement in pursuing a degree in higher education administration is to enable other students, like myself, to serve in similar capacities and succeed in their academic careers. This is what I strive to achieve; to make sure every student is afforded the same quality education and experience that I've received at the University at Albany.