

Courtney Everson '03, Class Vice President

What kinds of projects did you work on during your time in the USG, and do you see, in your daily life, how your experiences in the USG have been helpful to you?

When I served in the USG, I primarily worked on event planning for our Class. I definitely think that the event planning experience is helpful in not only my career, where I often am involved in planning corporate events (as an extension of my normal day job), but it is also helpful in my personal life. Successful event planning is a skill, and the more experience you have with it, the better you tend to be at it.



Looking back at your time in the USG as an alum, what would you say was your most meaningful experience?

My most meaningful experience was our entire graduation weekend. It was the culmination of our service to the University and the Class, and everything turned out beautifully, despite the rain!

How, if at all, has your time in the USG influenced your career/academic path after graduation? Do you think that serving in the USG helps students prepare for life outside the Orange Bubble?

My participation in the USG certainly taught me about leadership and organizing groups of people, which are skills that I use every day in my job and have throughout my career. Because Princeton student life is so vibrant and full of opportunities competing for students' valuable time, it was critical for our leadership team to find ways to bring a diverse class together in ways that were compelling and interesting for a large group of people. This is also true in the workplace. As a leader you are constantly working to find ways to attract and focus resources and motivate people to drive in the same direction, which I believe is also true of class and undergraduate leadership. The event planning skills also translate to managing large-scale projects with many moving parts and potential areas for things to go wrong.

Did you have any previous experience in a student government before running for the USG?

Before serving in the USG at Princeton, I had served as an officer in my high school's student council. The USG is similar, just on a different scale. That said, I don't think prior experience is necessary at all for successful participation in the USG. If anything, the USG probably would benefit from including some fresh perspectives from students who are not traditional "student government types."

Rishi Jaitly '04, Class Vice President

While my campus activities at Princeton spanned a wide range of areas from theater and dance to service and sports, the USG was central to my campus experience. As class vice president all four years, I launched a program encouraging RA groups across colleges to do joint programming. As Projects Board Chair, I encouraged new student groups to launch and collaborate with greater frequency. And as a member of a variety of additional committees, I helped the administration imagine the 4-year college system, the freshman social experience, and the presence of prominent speakers on campus.

Before Princeton, I had no experience in student government. In the summer of 2000, just before I entered Princeton, I remember deciding that I should try USG because "I wanted to be a leader" and learn what impact felt like. And leadership skills, experiences, and points of reference is what the USG gave me. Throughout my career since Princeton, leadership has loomed large in everything I've done - as social entrepreneur, a policy activist, a business executive, and more. I first became familiar with leadership through USG at Princeton - period. I learned what leadership entails, what it feels like, and what it means. I learned how to build consensus, to create a culture of maturity, excellence, and insight, and to derive energy from impact. Since Princeton USG, I've decided to settle for nothing less than genuine leadership in my career - whether it was serving as a Princeton trustee, a policy lead in Washington, a partnerships leader at Google, a social entrepreneur in Michigan, or a business executive at Twitter.

As a Professor once remarked to me, Princeton is a training ground. For those of us interested in leadership across sectors, Princeton USG provides a complex, satisfying forum to grow as leaders. It is nothing less than the truth to say that I would not be where I am today had I not made the decision to join Princeton USG. In fact, I look back on my decision to run for office in the first place - at the age of 17 in the fall of 2000 - as one of the most meaningful and positively consequential decisions I've ever made.

