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Political path leads alumna to S.F. City Hall Fellowship

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Political path leads alumna to S.F. City Hall Fellowship

Kelsea Vaughan '15 came to Dominican seeking a career that would allow her to empower others with the tools to live a better life. She enrolled as an English major with the goal of eventually becoming a teacher. Then, she did what a lot of students do. She explored her options, discovered new interests, set her sights on new goals, and happily found herself on a new, unexpected path that has led her to San Francisco's City Hall.

It was an introductory political science course that changed everything for Kelsea. She was fascinated by the subject and inspired by her professor. She realized that through politics and public policy she could become a difference maker.

By the end of her freshman year, the honors student had declared herself a [Political Science](#) major – keeping English as a minor and later adding International Studies as a second degree – and set about immersing herself in politics both on and off campus alongside peers and faculty mentors.

Kelsea helped to organize Constitution Day events, voter registration drives, and Dominican's participation in the national [Congress to Campus program](#). She worked on a study designed to understand the impact of exit polls. Dominican connected Kelsea to her first internship with the Marin-based Open A Door Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on assisting young women from post-conflict countries to apply to U.S. colleges and win scholarships to fund their education. She returned to intern for the organization again during her senior year before being promoted to program coordinator.

However, it was the semester she spent in Washington, D.C. as a 2014 [Panetta Institute Congressional Intern](#) in the office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui which helped shape Kelsea's future plans. Dominican has enjoyed a long-term partnership with the Panetta Institute, and many former Panetta interns have continued into careers focused on public service at the national, state, and local levels.

"I had been playing around with the idea of going into law, but I decided that what I really wanted to do was work in government so that I could work on projects where I could see the direct impact on people's lives," Kelsea says. "I loved D.C., but I was ready to come back to the Bay Area and make change in my local community."

After graduating Summa Cum Laude with Departmental Honors, Kelsea earned a coveted spot as a San Francisco City Hall Fellow. She was accepted into the program following an intense interview process, during which 175 applicants vied for 16 spots. The year-long program expands upon Kelsea's Dominican Experience by integrating hands-on, full-time local government work experience with intensive training in how cities work and insight into the people, issues, and organizations that influence local policy.

Kelsea's placement in the San Francisco Public Library's Facilities Division puts her at the center of a network that includes 27 branch libraries, a main library, book mobiles, and an administration building. Throughout the year she will produce reports to monitor the efficiency of operations and manage projects that will impact the Library for years to come. She will dive deep into the government structure, the local policy-making process, and the relationship and interactions between both local and state, and local and federal government.

The work draws on the applied skills she honed at Dominican. And, working in the library fits well with her passions for democracy and education: "A public library is a hallmark of Democracy," she says. "It is a place where people from all walks of life can come together and access information. It is a home of equity and community."

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