Internships, Conference Help Shape Student’s Career Goals
by Lucy Constantino

Vianes Rodriguez is always planning his next move. Citing the 2008 presidential election as his inspiration for majoring in political science, the senior, who will graduate in March, has taken steps along the way to secure a future in public service.

“I knew that I wanted to pursue a major in college that would allow me the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the way elections work, as well as the influence people and events can have in shaping our political debate,” said the Denver native.

In 2013, Rodriguez was selected by the political science department to attend a three-day U.S. Naval Academy conference in Annapolis, MD, where students from across the nation collaborated at roundtable lectures and discussions on a given topic.

“When I attended, the topic was Human Security in the Information Age,” he said. “That was a particularly exciting and timely topic because the Snowden leaks had just been in the news.”

This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Rodriguez to experience firsthand the varying accounts and opinions from speakers like former President Bill Clinton and General Michael Hayden on whether Snowden was considered a hero or a traitor.

“I gained a wealth of information as to how much technology can influence the direction of an entire country,” said Rodriguez. “We may think of social media as a way to express ourselves, but technology as a whole is utilized by nations in similar ways to promote their values and beliefs.”

Rodriguez also totes two foundational internships under his belt: one for Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) and one with the Denver Public Defender’s office.

While with Senator Bennet’s office, Rodriguez worked with the finance legislative team to research tax reforms. He also researched the effects of wildfires in Colorado and gave tours of the U.S. Capitol to visitors from Colorado.

At the Denver Public Defender’s office, Rodriguez teamed with investigators to help the attorneys draft a defense for their clients, ran subpoenas to the Defense Attorney’s office, interviewed witnesses and compiled discovery files.

“My internships have been very influential in terms of helping me decide the type of career I would like to pursue,” he said. “They allowed me to see the results of my work in real time, and the difference it can make in people’s lives.”
As for Rodriguez’s next move? “I would like to go into a form of public service, perhaps working for the U.S. Justice Department, or become a federal public defender specializing in appellate litigation.”

In the much nearer future, Rodriguez is currently applying to law school with hopes of enrolling this fall.