Student Finds Public Policy Program a Perfect Fit
by Janette Ballard

For Kayla Blomquist, running a fictitious state during a summer leadership conference in high school was the perfect prelude to her studies at the University of Denver. The experience of holding elections, conducting business at the city, county and state levels, and developing bills during the conference had sparked her interest in public policy, which continues today.

“My favorite aspect of the public policy program is the faculty,” said Blomquist, a sophomore public policy and international studies major. “So far, I have had the privilege of working with Professors Robert Fusfeld and Richard Lamm. Not only are they experts in their field with extensive real world experience, but they are also extremely helpful with both classwork and career planning. In each public policy class I have taken, I have felt challenged to develop my analytical and critical thinking, which I believe will be invaluable to my future career.”

Last year, Blomquist took a freshman seminar entitled, "Private Troubles and Public Issues—the Class of 2017 and the American Future” taught by Fusfeld. “I thoroughly enjoyed the multidisciplinary nature of that class and the opportunity to brainstorm creative, yet realistic solutions to our society's most pressing issues,” she said. She since has taken other seminar-type public policy classes through the University Honors Program.

"Kayla is an extraordinarily brilliant and thoughtful student,” Fusfeld said. “She has very broad and varied academic interests yet is also able to achieve outstanding success as a figure skater. I believe that when Kayla brings her many talents to bear she will succeed brilliantly at whatever goals she seeks to achieve.”

Blomquist is a member of the DU Club Figure Skating team, and competed in each of the four team competitions last year, including nationals. She medaled in both of her ice dancing events at the 2014 Intercollegiate National Championships. Blomquist will serve as the Competition Chair for the upcoming season, and will continue working as a coach for the Learn to Skate Program at the Ritchie Center.

Off the ice, she continues to pursue her interest in public policy and international studies. Last year, Blomquist, who also is studying Mandarin Chinese, worked as an intern for the Tai Initiative, a non-profit organization that seeks to improve U.S.-China subnational relations.

“For my internship, I helped manage the webpage, wrote several blog post-interviews and helped organize the 2nd Annual Regional Conference on U.S.-China Local Relations, held in Denver in May. With that internship, I was able to explore U.S.-China relations in areas such as business, education, environment and community connections,” she said.
Blomquist plans to stay involved with the Tai Initiative and volunteer at the Confucius Institute of Denver this year, and will apply for other internships that provide opportunities to work abroad. She also would like to do research within the field of public policy and international studies.

“After graduation, I hope to gain experience working abroad before obtaining my master's degree in a subfield of international relations,” Blomquist said. “I hope to have a career that combines my loves of travel and learning with the opportunity to develop solutions to international concerns.”