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"Washington Week": Integrating Faith and Professional Dreams

This summer, in July, high school girls from the U.S. and Europe will spend a week in Washington, DC exploring ways to integrate their faith with their professional aspirations.

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This summer in July, Yuma Center in Washington, DC will host its 4th annual Washington Week program for high school girls. Last year's

edition drew young women from across the U.S. and Europe.

Washington Week is designed to help high school girls explore career opportunities in media and public policy while also learning about ethical leadership and the importance of character and the values that come from one's faith in every profession.

"I think it's important for high school girls to think about their professional futures," said Gabriela of New Jersey, who attended the program last year. "*Washington Week* taught me that a strong foundation in what you believe can take you to far-off places."

"I learned how to talk to others and to be polite in a professional environment. I also had the opportunity to dress professionally everyday and to learn how to take the Metro," said Maddy of Virginia

who also attended the program in 2017.

“Washington Week was an incredible experience that has broadened my professional horizons immensely and has helped me make lifelong friends,” said Isabel from Maryland who also attended in 2017.

The students can choose to participate in either a one-week seminar focused on domestic policy and communications or a separate week-long conference that centers on global affairs and human rights. Hearing the personal and professional stories of people working in these fields broadens perspectives and helps the girls envision themselves serving society in these capacities.

"We need to think about our professional futures because we need to be prepared for what the future may bring and start to think

about what we want to accomplish in life and what our interests are and how we can help the world," said Maria from South Carolina, a past participant.

Whether visiting the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court or chatting with a State Representative or a former White House staff member, students learn what it means to be a civil servant. Hearing a speechwriter talk about her craft helps them appreciate the art and challenge of communication. Meeting with an immigration lawyer and an analyst from the FBI gives them a personal understanding of the multiple layers and issues involved in security.

"The FBI and the White House were my top two favorite site visits," said participant Barbara from New Jersey, who dreams one day of working at the FBI.

“I liked going to the House of Representatives because I liked the very professional and serious atmosphere there. Getting to see where politicians work was amazing. I also liked that we got to go inside an office and speak with a representative,” said Maria.

“I love the visit to the FBI. I love the importance they place on teamwork and how they describe the FBI as a family. I was impressed with the efficient procedures and how many different jobs there were. It was eye-opening and gave me a great appreciation for the FBI,” said 2017 participant Kiley.

For those interested in global affairs, visiting multiple embassies, listening to dissidents who escaped communist countries, hearing from retired intelligence officers and going to the World Bank to solve a case study on anti-fraud are eye-

opening. All of these program elements give perspective on reading the daily news and inspire them to consider possible future careers.

During both weeks, the girls have a chance to study the history of the nation's capital by visiting museums and national monuments. They also take part in small group discussions with fellow participants and program leaders about the role of one's faith in everyday life and work.

"I think that by integrating my faith life into my everyday work, I can truly appreciate my work. The speakers helped me see that faith and work should go hand in hand," said Maddy.

Through the experience, they are encouraged to think big about their future. They are exposed to numerous professionals who talk to them about their work and help them understand how they could

pursue a career in their field. As one participant put it, *Washington Week* taught her “not to be afraid of my future.”

Every element of the program incorporates how to work with integrity and purpose. Many speakers talk about how they integrate a career with family and faith, and the ways in which they strive to bring optimism and excellence to their workplace. As one participant said, she learned “how to be a woman of faith and reason in the professional world.”

The students—mostly rising juniors and seniors—gain a deeper understanding of U.S. and world history, and the issues facing us today. They learn the central role that ethical leadership plays in influential positions—and the importance of service and an outlook

that always aims to improve an element of life or society.

Many have developed lasting friendships through the program. The girls have a lot of fun, and they leave *Washington Week* energized to dream about their future, and about how they can improve the lives of others in the years to come.

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For more information about the program, visit: [https://
www.yumadc.org/washingtonweek](https://www.yumadc.org/washingtonweek)

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