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Alumna traces global success to U. roots

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More than 100 people filled the Eagleton Institute of Politics Wednesday evening to hear guest speaker Lona Valmore, special assistant to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, talk about her career and success.

Valmore was this year's speaker for the Albert W. Lewitt Endowed Lecture, an annual event held at the Eagleton Institute that invites present or former members of Congress, congressional staffers or experts on the legislative body to the Douglass campus.

The Rutgers College alumna spoke on a variety of issues, including her career in politics, the importance of volunteering and campaigning and how students can start political careers.

"I firmly believe that if you have any interest in politics, go and do a campaign. Volunteer on a campaign and find your niche there," Valmore said.

She told students it is important to listen to the opinions of friends and family and consider their feedback when it comes to career choices. She also said preparation is a key to success.

Valmore gained valuable experience working on Robert Torricelli's 1996 United States Senate campaign, she said.

"Working on a statewide campaign was a great experience," she said. "I learned way more on the ground than I ever would have in the classroom."

Valmore said regardless of one's career path, it is important to do something additional that does not revolve around work in order to have a balanced schedule.

Organizers and many attendees had positive reactions to Valmore's words of advice.

"I thought it was terrific because I thought everyone here thought it was terrific," said John Weingart, associate director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics.

Weingart said there was an interesting set of questions and a great mix of students, which showed the perspective of a young person in the middle of politics.

One Eagleton's goals is to help demystify politics and Washington, he said.

"I thought it was very inspirational for someone who comes from Rutgers and works in a national setting, accomplishing so much and working with someone so established," said Joel Martinez, a School of Arts and Sciences first-year student.

School of Environmental and Biological Sciences first-year student Jane Rosenblatt was proud to know Valmore is a product of a New Jersey university.

"All these events at Eagleton make these political people seem really approachable," she said. "You can see how Jersey can get you pretty far, especially a woman being so influential in such a high setting."

Valmore attributes much of her success to her time at the University.

"Rutgers kept my interest so much so that it kept me going throughout my career," she said. "Rutgers was the best deal I ever had."

Valmore joined Clinton's staff in 2003 as senior advisor and worked on her book tour as well as her Senate and presidential campaigns in 2006 and 2008, respectively, and served as acting chief of staff for Clinton during the summer of 2008.

After six years as her senior advisor, Valmore joined the State Department and now works as the special assistant to Clinton, helping to craft the Secretary of State's long-term calendar by working closely with Clinton and her senior staff to prioritize international travel and domestic responsibilities.

When asked if she would ever consider running for office, Valmore said no.

"I would never want to fundraise," she said.



Andrew Howard / Senior Staff Photographer

Lona Valmore, a University alumna and special assistant to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, talks about her success, career path and experience as a University student, Wednesday at the Eagleton Institute of Politics on Douglass campus.

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