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Chelsea Pettit will travel to Washington, D.C. on behalf of Soils Lab

Summary: Chelsea Pettit has always been interested in law and biology, but it wasn't until the second semester of her junior year that those interests converged in an opportunity to witness the political process firsthand. Pettit will join others in Washington, D.C., to lobby for the revision of cuts to the local Soils Lab.

(February 13, 2009)-By Ruth Hamberg '09 -- Chelsea Pettit has always been interested in law and biology, but it wasn't until the second semester of her junior year in college that those interests converged in an amazing opportunity to witness the political process firsthand.

A student at the University of Minnesota, Morris, Pettit will join others from the Morris area in Washington, D.C., February 28 through March 5, to lobby for the revision of cuts made by the Bush administration to the Agricultural Research Service budget. The cuts have already affected the work at the North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory, located in Morris, Minn.

The opportunity comes as part of Pettit's internship with the lab through the University of Minnesota, Morris' Center for Small Towns. Pettit was hired through the Connecting Students and Communities program at the Center, which receives major funding from the program through the University of Minnesota West Central Partnership.

Pettit found the position on the campus' Career Center Web site after reading an e-mail alerting students to the openings. "I thought, I'm a biology major... and I have the passion for the law, so this would be a good learning opportunity for me." Her administrative work serves the projects of the Barnes-Aastad Association, a non-profit organization that in turn supports the Soils Lab. In Washington, D.C., she will support the Barnes-Aastad Association's annual efforts to communicate to the administration the important role that the lab serves in the community.

"Everyone [in the Morris area] is directly affected by agriculture and without the Soils Lab we would be in trouble," Pettit said. The lab's agricultural research has implications for the entire industry, a concept that Pettit is familiar with as a result of her time at UMM, where students are inspired to think outside of the immediate community.

"[My experience at Morris] gave me the tools that I need to not be afraid, to be excited, to use what I've learned," said Pettit.

UMM encourages and enables students to develop connections to the wider community, even up to the national level. For one week at the beginning of March, Chelsea Pettit will do just that.

And the trip itself? "I'm more than excited. I'll be taking a lot of pictures," said Pettit.

Photo by Ruth Hamberg '09: Chelsea Pettit

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