

Student Simulation Opportunity at Stetson University

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The Patrick L. Smith Model United States Senate is a highly esteemed event that provides students with an immersive, simulation experience in the legislative process of the United States Senate. It was founded in 1971 by T. Wayne Bailey and Jon Fraser, with the aim of providing students with a unique opportunity to learn about the intricate workings of government and the complexities of the legislative process. Over the past 50 years, the Patrick L. Smith Model United States Senate has done just that.

During the Model Senate, students are assigned the role of a United States senator and are tasked with role playing that senator throughout the three-day event. Prior to the event, students are given a piece of legislation that they are trying to move through committee and eventually win passage on the Senate floor. This requires students to conduct extensive research, draft amendments, negotiate with other senators, think strategically, and articulate their position effectively. Through this process, students learn valuable skills such as critical thinking, strategic planning, and effective communication. Students also have fun imitating their senator on the Senate floor as well as in their committee meetings. Students have to think strategically about how to get their legislation passed as well as how they will vote on other senators' legislation. It is a very lively and fast-moving simulation experience designed to replicate what it would be like to work as a United States senator.

One of the unique aspects of the Patrick L. Smith Model United States Senate is that it is not limited to Stetson University students. Every year, visiting schools from across the country are invited to participate, bringing together a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. This

past year, the Model Senate welcomed schools such as Bridgewater State, Goucher, Santa Fe State College, Valdosta State College, Florida Southern, and Embry-Riddle. These schools sent students who were eager to participate in the Model Senate, and who brought with them their unique backgrounds and experiences. The Model Senate event is enriched by visiting students. These visiting students, while role playing their assigned senator, get to meet other students from across the country and forge new relationships with diverse individuals. We welcome these students to Stetson University's campus and bring them into the Model Senate community. Visiting students get to spend time on a new campus, meeting students who share their interests and passions. Both the Stetson community and our guests are enhanced by participation in the Model Senate.

The Model Senate has a rich history of hosting distinguished speakers who have made significant contributions to the political landscape. Over the years, we have been honored to welcome prominent figures such as President Joe Biden, when he was the senator from Delaware, who shared his insights on leadership and public service. We have also had the privilege of hosting Florida's own political leaders, including Bob Graham and Bill Nelson, who provided valuable perspectives on state and national governance. Last year Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, joined us and offered his expertise on agricultural policy, and his career in politics. The event has also seen the participation of senators like Nancy Kassebaum, Max Cleland, Lawton Chiles, and Robert Byrd, who shared their experiences and engaged with students on critical legislative issues. These influential speakers have added immense value to the Model Senate experience, providing students with unique opportunities to learn from the best in the field and gain insights into the challenges and triumphs of public service. In the reception following the keynote address, students have an opportunity to network with the speaker as well

as other Model Senate alumni who have pursued careers in law and other areas. These prominent addresses help students connect their passions on issues to real world careers that affect change throughout the country.

The Patrick L. Smith Model United States Senate is named after Stetson political science and Model Senate alumnus Patrick L. Smith, who has committed to supporting the event for ten years beginning in 2022. His generous contributions will continue to be instrumental in ensuring the success of the Model Senate and providing students from various universities with this invaluable learning experience. Patrick enjoys connecting and networking with students helping them pursue their life goals. The Model Senate was such an important part of his collegiate experience that he hopes to help support this great event for current and future students.

The Model Senate is a highlight of the political science program at Stetson University, and it is not difficult to see why. It provides students with a unique opportunity to engage in the legislative process and learn from experienced lawmakers, all while developing essential skills for their future careers. Students learn the different motivations of their own senator as well as others, they work together with their party leadership to pursue legislative success, and they hold committee hearings to learn from experts about the legislation they are amending and voting on. Students have the opportunity to dig into policy issues across a diverse range of topics and speak as their senator on the Senate floor. Students not only hone their critical thinking and communication skills, but they learn a lot about themselves and their ability to forge compromise and engage in a high-paced policy focused environment. Participating in the Model Senate is a highlight of many of our alumni's collegiate career, having long lasting impacts on their goals

and career choices. The Model Senate is also an excellent way for students to network with their peers and build relationships that can last a lifetime.

Our goal is to make the Patrick L. Smith Model United States Senate an event that attracts students from all over the country. We believe that by offering students a unique and immersive experience in the legislative process, we can inspire the next generation of leaders and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. We invite students from every school in the state of Florida and all from around the nation to participate in this exciting event and to join us in shaping the future of our nation. Whether you are interested in politics, law, or simply want to learn more about the legislative process, the Model Senate is an excellent opportunity to gain practical experience and develop the skills you need to succeed. We look forward to welcoming you to the Model Senate and to seeing the innovative ideas and solutions that you bring to the table.

This year the Model Senate will be held from March 21st to 23rd at Stetson University. If you or your students are interested, please contact Dr. Kelly B. Smith (ksmith33@stetson.edu) for more information. We would love to work with you to bring a team of students to Stetson this Spring!



David Hill is the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Stetson University. His research and teaching interests include electoral participation, deliberative democracy, and the legislative process. He received his B.A. from Stetson University and his Ph.D. from the University of Florida.



Dr. Kelly B. Smith is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Stetson University. Her research interests include state politics and policymaking, federalism, bureaucratic politics, and health and education policy. She received her BA from Providence College and her PhD from Brown University.
