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'I WASN'T ALONE'

SENIOR CHLOE GRELL SHARES LEADERSHIP LESSONS LEARNED AT SUMMIT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | September 6, 2024

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Chloe Grell, '25 [Political Science](#), [Communication](#), and [Leadership](#), was selected to represent Christopher Newport at the Student Leader Global Summit at the University of Pretoria in South Africa in July. Grell, a member of the [President's Leadership Program](#), was the only student from the United States to attend.

It was a life-changing opportunity for Grell. She was able to hone her leadership and problem solving skills alongside student delegates from 14 other countries. The theme of the summit was "Empowering Tomorrow: Sustainable Leadership for a Global Context."

It was the second time Grell visited South Africa as a Captain. She traveled to the country in May 2023 as part of the faculty-led program, "South Africa's Pursuit of Social Justice."

In her own words, Grell describes how the summit influenced her

worldview and reinforced her leadership abilities:

“During the summit, the narratives shared by both faculty and students were deeply personal and passionate, and I realized that leadership isn’t just about titles or positions; it’s about the impact you make and the passion you bring. The concept of sustainable leadership, which focuses on empowering others to become leaders, resonated deeply with me. The summit discussions gave new meaning to the leadership principles I’ve studied at CNU. I realized that followers are as crucial as leaders — without them, there’s no cause, no passion, and no drive for change. These followers can also be servant leaders, guiding others by example and teaching along the way.

One of the most rewarding parts of the summit was the chance to network with students from all over the world. Through informal conversations, I learned so much about their cultures and lives. One delegate captured it perfectly: even though we didn’t physically travel to all the countries represented, it felt as though we had.

On the second day of the summit, we shifted to more personal narrative exchanges. We shared our leadership experiences and reflected on our own strengths and weaknesses. It was comforting to discover that I wasn’t alone in feeling underqualified or struggling with the challenges of student leadership, like setting boundaries and maintaining mental health. Despite our different backgrounds and universities, there was a shared understanding among us student leaders. The summit provided a valuable space for us to collaborate on solutions and strategies that we could take back to our respective institutions and beyond.

This experience has fueled my desire to pursue a career that fosters global cross-cultural communication and leadership within the U.S. government. I now have personal contacts in various parts of the world, and I’m eager to continue expanding my network, both professionally and personally. I wholeheartedly recommend this opportunity to other students. Upon returning to CNU, I plan to advocate for this program, encouraging more students to apply, represent CNU, and have the life-changing experience that I did.”

