

Back in the Classroom

Distinguished Young Alumnus Visits Campus



K-State Research and Extension

As a student sitting in an Umberger Hall classroom, Justine Sterling never imagined that a few years later she would be speaking to K-State students and describing how the president of the United States invited her to the Oval Office to offer her a job. But that's exactly what happened.

After graduating from K-State in 2007 with a degree in agricultural communications and journalism, she accepted an unpaid internship in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House. Three months later, she moved to the Social Office that handles White House social events, such as state dinners.

"I thrive under pressure," Sterling said. "Working until midnight and weekends, the White House job was my life."

At the end of his second term, President Bush invited Sterling to the Oval Office and asked her to move to Dallas to work at the Bush Center. She accepted and packed her bags for Texas.

As part of her new job, she organized two large-scale inaugural events for service members wounded in combat. She also went to Africa twice to support President and Laura Bush's trips there as part of their global health program.

Sterling was on campus February 26 as an inaugural recipient of the Distinguished Young Alumni Award from the K-State Alumni Association Student Alumni Board. She gave a presentation in the K-State Student Union and spoke to several classes and FFA officers.

Emily Beneda, freshman in food science from Wilson and state FFA

president, was anxious to listen to Sterling.

"It was a great opportunity to meet with Justine," Beneda said. "Not only did she offer plenty of great advice, but listening to the stories about her journey from a small town in Kansas all the way to Washington, D.C., was both entertaining and inspiring. Her advice had a greater impact on me because she has been exactly where we are now, and she understands what we are going through."

With the presidential library opening in May, Sterling expects to move on to new opportunities.

"My ultimate goal is to find something that I'm passionate about and agree with the goals ... maybe planning the Olympics."