

UT-Austin Student Leveraging Knowledge for the Social Good

by Leslie Asher Blair

Paulina Sosa is passionate about changing the world. The fifth-year senior began at the University of Texas (UT)-Austin in 2008 as a philosophy major with every intention of entering law school. Since then, she has added psychology as a second major, completed the Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) Pre-Graduate Internship, become a congressional district leader for the ONE Campaign, become an intern in Sen. John Cornyn's office, been named UT-Austin representative for the Clinton Global Initiative and assumed leadership of the IE Citizen Scholars.

Along the way, Sosa decided that she would like to merge her passion for global health and policy with a master's degree in public health.

"My dream really is to become a policy analyst with a government agency that focuses on providing and finding solutions for extreme poverty in the poorest countries," said Sosa.

She is well on her way through her work with the ONE Campaign. ONE is a grass-roots advocacy and campaigning organization that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa, by raising public awareness and pressuring political leaders to support smart and effective policies and programs that are saving lives, helping to put kids in school and improving futures. The organization works around a core of nine issues including health and infectious diseases, water and sanitation, agriculture, and education.

"I am basically a community organizer for different congressional districts in Austin," Sosa explained. She has established a leadership committee of seven and has gathered volunteers to partner with about 20 different nonprofit groups in Austin, including Comfort the Children International, 10,000 Villages, Safe Place and Oxfam Action Corps. "There is so much activism in this city yet so many people who don't understand or care about the impact of poverty around the world. For me to come to grips, I must understand the mindset instead of being intolerant. I'm doing what I can to raise awareness," she said.

Rick Cherwitz, professor of communications and the founder and director of the Intellectual Entrepreneurship Consortium, which is part of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at

UT-Austin, said, "Paulina represents the very essence of what we mean by a citizen scholar, someone who leverages knowledge for social good. Her work in the community typifies the philosophy of Intellectual Entrepreneurship, extending conventional notions of service to encompass academic engagement – the integration of thinking and doing."

Sosa sees her experience in the IE Pre-Graduate Internship and IE Citizen Scholars as part of her educational experience that has prepared her to make a difference. "My education has provided me with the skill set to work with big community leaders and nonprofit leaders," she said. But IE also led Sosa to work in public health. She was able to meet many public health professors and students while in the IE program. "In a sense, it was like my own exploration of the field, but with the help of IE."

Recently, Sosa was part of "Why Bother: Voices of a New Generation," a discussion about voter turnout among three young adults organized by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life and co-sponsored by KLRU and KUT. Sosa said, "As a voter, I'm very passionate about everyone who can vote should vote." She added that her work with ONE has taught her that one can be politically active in other ways besides voting. "Working with politicians has given me insight into how policy is made and what happens to get things done. I wanted to share that with others." She also wrote an opinion piece, "Escape from Apathy," published on the College of Liberal Arts website, and in the *Austin American Statesman* and the *San Antonio Express News* challenging others to vote – especially young voters.

Said Sosa, "When you make your voice known to elected officials, you can make a difference. The millennial generation will be tomorrow's leaders. It is up to us to decide what our future will look like."

About Intellectual Entrepreneurship Citizen Scholars

The IE Citizen Scholars is an official UT-Austin student organization. Its mission is to help bring the IE philosophy and methods of education to students at the university. The IE Citizen Scholars strives to create a campus network where stu-



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Paulina Sosa, fifth-year senior at the University of Texas-Austin and president of IE Citizen Scholars

dents can build and own their IE initiatives, expand IE's college representation across campus and assist the IE Consortium in implementing efficient ways to recruit students for the IE Pre-Graduate Internship. The IE initiatives are part of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and represent only a few of the initiatives within the division that support first-generation and underrepresented students.

