



Rachael Estes graduated from the Women & Politics Institute's WeLead program in 2013 and continues to support WeLead as a frequent speaker and mentor for current WeLeaders. Rachael's favorite part of the program was hearing from such accomplished and successful women in politics. Estes said, "I really enjoyed learning the nuts and bolts of running a campaign. It was also inspiring to be in the company of driven, talented and politically-minded young women."

Of all her experiences in WeLead, Rachael most values the emphasis on building and maintaining relationships. "It's important to develop strong analytical skills and issue-area expertise (especially in a policy role), but building and maintaining relationships is critical to a successful career," she said.

Estes has worked on clean energy policy for over a decade, and currently serves as the Government and Regulatory Affairs Manager for Apex Clean Energy, a renewable energy company with over 15GW of renewable energy under development across the country. In her role at Apex, Estes manages government affairs for the East Coast. She engages with government leaders to advocate for stronger renewable energy policies and manages a team of lobbyists in various states throughout the region. Prior to her time at Apex, Estes served as the Climate and Energy Policy Manager at the North Carolina Conservation Network (NCCN) where she represented over 100 environmental groups across the state to advocate for stronger environmental protections and renewable energy policies in NC.

Prior to her time at NCCN, Estes served as the Energy and Commerce Committee Legislative Aide for US Congresswoman Kathy Castor (FL-14), who now serves as the Chair of the Select Committee on Climate Change. During her time on Capitol Hill, Estes served as the lead staffer for the Gulf Coast Caucus, which worked towards a bipartisan response to the 2010 BP Oil Spill and ultimately passed the RESTORE Act in 2012. Estes has a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Duke University and a BA in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Offering advice for current and future WeLeaders, Estes quoted another successful woman. "Follow the advice of Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, 'Do one thing every day that scares you.' While everyday may be a bit ambitious, I certainly try to consistently push my own boundaries and comfort zone. If you're not challenging yourself on a regular basis, you're missing opportunities. Whether it's speaking at a conference, starting that business, reaching out to that executive to get coffee, or taking a solo trip across the world, we have to get comfortable taking risks in order to accomplish our ambitious goals."

She added, "Take advantage of this time and reach out to speakers whose career path seems interesting to you. Get to know the other ladies in the program- they will all be somebody you'll want to know someday!"