

Former Panetta intern keeps passion for politics

"You don't have to be a government wonk or a policy wonk, but anything you have an interest in you can make a difference," says Cordi, who majored in [Political Science at Dominican](#) with a concentration in American Government. "You can influence policy and talk to people and make positive changes. In any area you have an interest in, whether it is medicine or education or agriculture or the arts."

Cordi is now District Manager for Sutter County Resource Conservation District. While at Dominican, she presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in, opposed the views of a representative of Senator John McCain in Dominican's first ever [VoteSmart Challenge](#), earned a Panetta Institute Congressional Internship in Washington, D.C. and stood on the steps of Angelico Hall as the student body spokesperson when [Dominican hosted a gubernatorial debate](#) between Jerry Brown and Meg Whitman in 2009.

Upon graduating from Dominican to pursue her Masters of Public Administration at Chico State where she graduated with distinction, Cordi had one simple goal.

"I just want to go home and help people," she said then.

Indeed Cordi has and she is making a difference. She returned to Sutter County where she first worked as an intern in high school. While in grad school, Cordi worked part time then full time as a project coordinator for Sutter County Resource Conservation District before being promoted to assistant district manager. On January 1, at the age of 25, she replaced retiring district manager Larry Lloyd.

"This has been a great starting point for me," Cordi says. "I'm still there. I'm now the boss."

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Cordi credits her ascent to district manager to her working relationship with Alison Howard, chair of Dominican's Department of Political Science and International Studies in the [School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#).

"From the very beginning of her college career Juleah showed amazing enthusiasm for learning new things. I always knew she would be very successful in anything she chose to do because of her curiosity, maturity, and amazing work ethic, all of which were more than apparent when she first stepped through the door to my Introduction to the Study of Politics class her freshman year," Howard says. "I have such fond memories of her as a student and I am beyond proud of her and all she has accomplished since graduating from Dominican."

Cordi also credits liberal arts-based classes she took at Dominican "that I found fascinating that I otherwise might have only a fringe experience with."

That balance contributed to her sudden success story, principles and beliefs she applies every day to her new job.

"One of my greatest lessons at Dominican was to think beyond what you do and what you know," Cordi says. "I go to work every day and I deal with agriculture and the Farm Bill and water, but there are so many more interesting things outside of that that you can learn about and be aware about and have an interest in that don't necessarily drive what you do with your life."

For example, Cordi is partnering with her sister, Emily, to take over the family's award-winning winery, Cordi Winery, on its 60-acre ranch in Live Oak. Juleah helps with harvesting, bottling and social media advertising. She tries to spend two weekends a month on the ranch.

Cordi also lent a helping hand to Howard and Dominican. She returned in February to participate in "[Congress to Campus](#)." She sat on a panel with former U.S. Representatives Frank Riggs (now a candidate for governor in Arizona) and Brian Baird (now President of Antioch University Seattle). Dominican President Mary Marcy moderated the event, which was aimed at encouraging civic literacy and participation among youth.

"Having her return to campus to share her experiences was invaluable for the current students," Howard says.

"The former members of Congress were very impressed with her and that she came back to campus to be a part of the program. We were so fortunate to have her in the major and at the University."

Cordi was delighted to be reunited with Howard, who inspired Cordi in her political aspirations. "But not everyone has the fortune of having her as a professor," Cordi says, smiling. "I had that coming in and I was fortunate enough to have her and the entire Political Science and International Studies department encourage that and nurture that further. To me, that is one of the greatest benefits of being at Dominican and being at a smaller university."