



PHOTOGRAPH BY KC KRAIT

# Jennifer adams

ON CAPITOL HILL

*Two Suitcases and a Résumé* is the name Jennifer Whitson Adams, '99, has chosen for the autobiography she'll write some day. "That's all I went to D.C. with," she said, "and I was able to get a job."

Adams was first introduced to politics during one of her three college internships, but she has always been involved with the world around her. In high school, she was vice president of the senior class. At Buffalo State, she participated in the Success Track for Academic Readiness (STAR) program, became involved with the African American Students Organization, and worked as a resident adviser. She earned a B.A. in public communication with a minor in African American studies.

"I chose public communication," said Adams, "because I was looking for a major in which I could use my natural style and talents." A born communicator, Adams honed specific skills: arranging events, planning public relations campaigns, and working with the media.

After graduation, Adams moved to Washington, D.C., with a plan. She gave herself three months to land a job on Capitol Hill, and she worked as a substitute teacher while she conducted her job search. "I was interested in being an advocate for health care or education," she said, "and so I looked for congressional committees that addressed those issues." Then she sent résumés to representatives who served on those committees.

Just before the three months were up, she landed an entry-level job. In turn, that led to the position of deputy communi-

cations director for the United States House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Democratic Staff. Her typical day started with reading several national newspapers (the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal* among them) to keep up with issues relating to, and coverage of, the committee. Routinely, she wrote press releases, created press advisories about events the office sponsored, and edited op-eds. Then there were the special events to organize, hearings to cover, and bills and amendments to distribute to the press corps.

"I like politics," Adams said. She credits her adviser, Professor Ronald Smith of the Communication Department, with helping her combine politics with public communication. "Now that I'm in D.C.," she said, "I see it's a whole specialty, and he opened it up to me."

Adams came to Buffalo State to earn a degree that would provide her with the skills to start her career. "And that's what I got," she said. Besides her adviser and her three internships, she credits the college with enabling her to become a better writer and to conduct research on the Web.

Adams, who is never without goals and a plan to reach them, was considering her next move even while she was learning all she could from her work. In March, she accepted a position as deputy communications director for Americans United to Protect Social Security, a not-for-profit organization opposing efforts to privatize Social Security.

But she's not resting on her laurels. "There's more to come," she said. "I've got a long way to go." ●