

# Leadership Program

Visions Newsletter Volume XXI Issue I



## Welcoming the Class of 2018

By: Megan Crowley ('17)

The Leadership Program welcomed 42 students from the class of 2018 into the community with open arms and a full schedule of Welcome Week events. On Saturday, August 17th, the program kicked-off Welcome Week with a reception for incoming students and families to meet Program Director, Margaret Marr, their teaching assistants, and their classmates.

On Sunday evening, the teaching assistants took the first-years on a frozen yogurt outing to Bethesda, Maryland. After bonding over a mutual love of dessert, the students' bonds were furthered by a series of ice breaker games in the nearby Caroline Friedman park.



**SPA Leadership Class of 2018**

Students journeyed further into the city the next day during the "Picnic on the Mall"—the National Mall, that is! Students enjoyed eating lunch with only-in-D.C. views of the Washington Monument and United

States Capitol Building. Teaching assistants and students had the opportunity to learn more about each other through a series of meaningful discussions and team-building activities. Feeling inspired, students broke off into groups to either get a library card from the Library of Congress, tour the Capitol Building, or explore the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum.

After spending a couple of days participating in the university's Freshman Service Experience or Discover DC programs, Leadership students reunited on Thursday evening to participate in a scavenger hunt around campus. Older students greeted first-years at each of the stations to provide them with information about the location.

First-year student Chloe Kuske found the scavenger hunt to be of great value in becoming acquainted with AU's campus: "I really enjoyed the scavenger hunt because, while all of the other activities helped to acclimate us to D.C., I actually found out where useful resources at AU are on the scavenger hunt."

Students topped off learning about AU's campus with a program-wide Ice Cream Social. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors enjoyed the opportunity to reunite with program members after a summer apart as well as welcome the first-years to the Leadership community.

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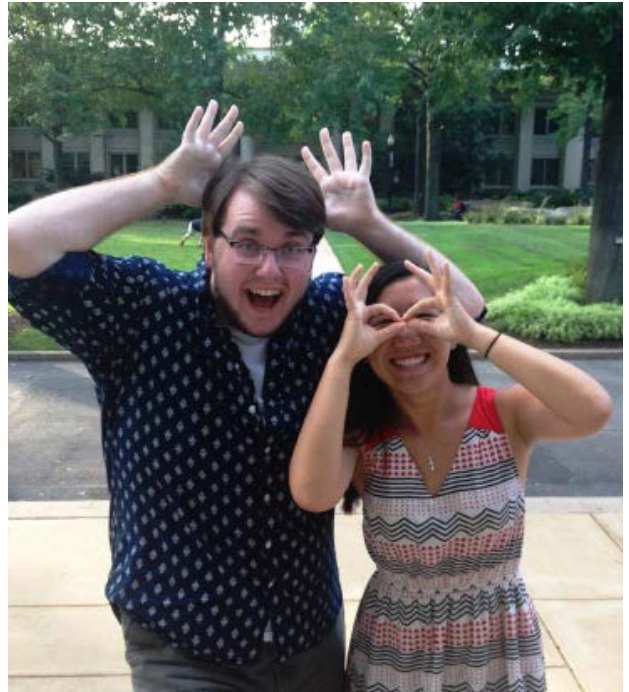
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*"I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody."  
—Lily Tomlin*



**Public Relations Co-Coordinators Wes Young and Sara Pierson flash their peacock and owl animal signs**



**Students bond during First-Year Retreat**

(Continued from page 1)

Friday night marked the program tradition of Monuments at Night. The group travelled down to the National Mall again to take in the monuments in their most beautiful state: nighttime. First-year Amelia Faraco-Hadlock explained that she enjoyed Monuments at Night not only because of the beautiful monuments but also “because I built some amazing friendships that I can see lasting my entire life.”

After taking in the sights of their new city, the group made their way to the famous Ben’s Chili Bowl on U Street. Late-night chili, french fries, and milkshakes were enjoyed by all before returning to campus. A senior and the Human Resources Co-Coordinator Madison Mullen left Monuments at Night feeling nostalgic, “When we went ‘monument-ing’ at night, I felt an overwhelming sense of real pride knowing that when my class graduates this year, the Leadership Program will be in the hands of such inspiring, powerful, and kind individuals.”

The week concluded with our annual Welcome Back BBQ on Sunday afternoon in the Leonard Picnic Area. Programming Co-Coordinators Natalie Giron and Emily Green prepared a wonderful spread of food for all to enjoy, while junior Paul Wells and sophomore Mahdi Khan grilled hot dogs and hamburgers.

“I enjoyed meeting the new Leadership class and reconnecting with all my friends while grilling for the wonderful Leadership BBQ!” Mahdi shared. Students enjoyed the company of their peers, faculty, and alumni before beginning classes the next day. The first-years benefitted from the alumni sharing tips for success and the many valuable experiences first-years have to look forward to during their next four years in the program.

School of Public Affairs Assistant Dean Jessica Waters congratulated the Class of 2018 on becoming a part of the program and spoke with students about the coming semester. The BBQ served as a charming conclusion to a fun-filled week of exploring and bonding for first-years and older students alike. The many Welcome Week events set the stage for another successful year for the Leadership Program.



**Lots of laughs during the Ice Cream Social**



**Welcome Back BBQ**



**Students explore the city during Monuments at Night**

# The First-Year Retreat

By: Bridget Anshus, Austin Edens, Natalie Hedden,  
Tom Lynch, Monique Tinglin, Henry Watson ('18)

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The first-year Leadership retreat is an opportunity to connect with the people students met during Welcome Week and will walk across the stage at commencement with four years later. Through the retreat first-years developed the most basic building block of relationships with their classmates: trust. Students developed new skills, refined those they already had, created a deeper understanding of who a leader really is and how they can become better leaders.

Students arrived at Shepherd's Spring and began a weekend of exciting, eye-opening, bonding experiences from the moment they stepped off the bus. Whether it was a toilet paper fashion show or flipping a tarp with some-twenty people standing on it, there was no shortage of activities designed to bring students closer together. Rotating between small groups allowed students to get to know every member of their Leadership class.

The significance of communication as a skill to becoming an effective leader was a common theme throughout the weekend. An example of the challenge of clear communication was highlighted when twenty-one first-year students standing on a blue tarp were challenged to flip over the tarp without a single member stepping off of it.



**First-years work together to flip over the tarp**

The tarp activity was one of many challenges at retreat to highlight the importance of effective communication. Many students identified communication as a skill they would like to strengthen during the coming year, and they look forward to learning how

to strengthen the skill in the Leadership Program. In between the laughs and fun activities, students slowed down for reflection to both better understand themselves and their classmates. Students engaged in a values identification activity in which they were asked to identify a single core value. While this proved to be a challenging task for all, it allowed students to explore what they hold near and dear to their hearts.



**SPA Leadership Class of 2018**

Ryan Trismen recalled, "Retreat connected me with people who possess unimaginable passion for making the world a better place. These people, who will undoubtedly become my lifelong friends, helped me to reflect on who I am not only as a leader, but as a person."

Throughout the weekend, first-years came to appreciate the variety of strengths and experiences their classmates bring to the program. First-year Jasmine Nadim capitalized on this point explaining, "I learned a lot about the people in my class and how our diverse backgrounds and upbringings make us strong leaders. I learned how much each person in the program has to offer towards the bigger goals we are all passionate about."

When the time came to board the bus and head back to campus Sunday afternoon, students had learned a great deal about one another. While students may not have expected their first weekend of college to involve the wilderness, a battlefield, and camping, they wouldn't have chosen to spend it any other way.

# Exploring Social Issues While Building Community: The Sophomore Retreat Experience

By: Wes Young ('17)

Amidst the homework, internships, and Instagram posts, sophomore Leadership students packed their bags and headed off to Camp Maria Retreat Center in Leonardtown, Maryland for their sophomore retreat.

Students woke up early Saturday morning to watch the sun rise from canoes on Breton Bay. After a hearty breakfast, the entire class gathered to hear from one another about the social issues students will address during the coming year.

Overlooking the bay, students shared their passion for making the world a better place by addressing enduring social problems such as domestic abuse, gun violence, hunger, access to education, and sexual assault.



**SPA Leadership Class of 2017  
at their sophomore retreat**

For Monica Gilsanz, the highlight of retreat was “hearing everyone be so open and share their personal connections to the problems they hope to combat this year. It was truly inspiring.” Students spent the afternoon in small groups discussing their issues in more detail while getting feedback from one another.

When the students weren’t discussing their social action projects, they were off canoeing, swimming in the pool, hanging out on the dock and getting to know one another on a deeper level.

Arielle Thomas enjoyed the deepened sense of community created by the sophomore retreat. “The atmosphere of Camp Maria was perfect for helping us sophomores open up, in regards to our project and personally, allowing us to create even deeper bonds,” she explained.



**Sophomores Megan Crowley, Sara Pierson,  
and Natalie Giron canoeing during retreat**

Susanna Billings had similar sentiments about retreat, sharing “the ability to both gain insight into my peers’ genuine passions, as well as discuss profound impacts their projects could generate was remarkable.” For many Leadership students, sophomore retreat is a weekend they’ll never forget.



**Students reflect after a memorable retreat**

# First Leadership Dinner Helps First-Years Acclimate to AU

By: Stuart Algood, Daria Dudzinski, Dominick Mortarotti, Alex Mosenson, Ben Zook ('18)

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The smell of freshly made pancakes and bacon filled McDowell Formal Lounge to kick off the first Leadership Dinner—or “Linner,” as program members like to call them—of the school year. Linnings bring together all four years of the program to share a good meal and even better conversation.

Programming Co-Coordinators Natalie Giron and Emily Green, along with their committee of first-year students, planned and prepared the great meal.



**Leadership students enjoying breakfast for dinner while listening to advice from older students**

In addition to the home-cooked comfort food, first-year students were treated to advice from older students in the program about successfully transitioning to college, including long-distance relationships, money management, and homesickness.

Senior Lori Interlicchio advised first-years in long-distance relationships to “ignore the naysayers.” She encouraged first-years to believe that long-distance relationships are possible if both partners are committed to making the relationship work. Co-Student Director Joelle Appenrodt added that it helps to have regularly scheduled phone calls.

Junior Alex Bradley and sophomore Dorian Kershaw addressed an important part of transitioning to college: money management. Alex and Dorian encouraged each first-year to carefully watch their expenditures,

devote time to creating a budget, and then revisit that budget throughout the semester. Alex and Dorian’s advice comforted first-year students as they learn to live in a new, expensive city.

First-year Peter Hutchinson enjoyed hearing from the older students, “Alex did a fantastic job explaining to freshmen how to better allocate money.” First-year Conchita Garcia also found the money management advice to be very helpful.

Two juniors in the program, Leilani Alexa and Winston Pigeon, then addressed the issue of homesickness. They shared that while homesickness is a common feeling among first-years, it is a feeling that passes as the year progresses. They explained that they were able to find “homes” at AU by joining clubs and making friends with similar interests.

Students left the Linner with not only stomachs full of delicious breakfast foods but also minds full of great advice from their peers. “The Linner was a great way to get to know the older students and understand how they became acclimated to life at AU,” said first-year Gregory Pratt. The Linner allowed first-years to become more prepared to handle the pits and maximize the peaks of their first semester at AU.



**Students bond over pancakes and advice about transitioning to college**

# Preparing Students for Post-Grad

By: Sara Pierson ('17)

Many great leaders have a role model, a person they look up to, or a figure in their life that helps guide them through difficult times and decisions. Just as leaders help others to attain their goal, mentors provide advice, valuable resources, and guidance to their mentees.

The SPA Leadership Mentorship Program pairs sophomores in the program with D.C. professionals who offer first-hand professional experience and career advice.



**First-year Alumni and Mentorship Committee helps to execute a successful reception**

The Mentorship Co-Coordinator Monica Gilsanz and Susanna Billings, worked hard over the summer months to recruit mentors, survey the sophomore class on their career goals and interests, and plan the annual kick-off networking reception.

This year's Mentorship Reception on October 1st began with unstructured networking. Mentees then went through six rounds of "flash mentoring" with pre-selected mentors. Students met mentors in a variety of fields,

including congressional offices, lobbying firms, law firms, and non-profits.

Wes Young, a mentee, explains the value in the program: "I was able to network with several professionals with similar passions as my own. I'm so thankful to have met with people who work for organizations that I hope to someday work for as well."



**Dorian Kershaw and Jordan Peebles enjoy networking**

Mentee Megan Crowley shares, "I found the Mentorship Reception to be beneficial for both professional connections and overall networking experience. Though I greatly look forward to my mentor relationship, the networking practice was equally as valuable to me."

Once paired with their mentors, students are encouraged to foster the mentor-mentee relationship by remaining in monthly contact, engaging in three face-to-face meetings, and having a job shadow experience. Mentors also offer guidance on resume building, interview skills, pursuing advanced degrees, and career trajectories. The Mentorship Program provides students with invaluable insight from D.C. professionals into life after graduation.

# Washington: A Learning Laboratory for Leadership students

By: Rahi Patel ('16)

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After executing two social action projects during their first two years in the program, students take the Leadership Program's internship class in one of their next three semesters. In the class, students study organizational behavior and theory and compare that with what they observe in their internships.

Every Thursday night upperclassmen students come together to apply the theories to their experiences in the office during the past week. Learning about organizational behavior allows students to critically analyze their positions in their organizations, gain new perspectives on office dynamics, and employ new strategies to better their professional relations.



**Eesha Bhave ('16) at her White House internship**

Senior London Swift interning with Liz Robbins Associates notes, "I think the lessons and experiences I'm gaining in the internship class will be invaluable to me in my professional career."

The fall 2014 semester's internship class is taught by Adjunct Professor Karen Wheelless (page 9), who has decades of experience working in federal agencies and private firms. Students hold internships in non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, federal agencies, lobbying firms, and even the White House (see right).

Emily Andre – *Department of State, Bureau of Energy Resources*

Eesha Bhave – *White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders*

Amanda Casoni – *Department of Treasury*

Jared Costanzo – *National Association of State Boards of Education*

Ben Derby – *National Institute of Standards & Technology*

Nolan Deming – *Library of Congress, Congressional Relations*

Kaileen Dougherty – *The Glover Park Group, Government Affairs*



**Emily Andre ('15) interning at the State Department**

James Duffy – *Taylor Strategic Partnerships*

Nicole Fisher – *AARP Experience Corps*

Alli Heller – *Center for International Policy*

Jasmine Jones – *Alliance of Community Health Plans*

Dorian Kershaw – *Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General*

Ben Link – *Millennial Action Project*

Edgar Ortega – *Public Citizen*

Rahi Patel – *FAIR Girls*

Nicholas Scida – *The Glover Park Group, Government Affairs*

Conor Siegel – *READWALL*

Kandice Simmons – *Suited for Change*

London Swift – *Liz Robbins Associates*



# Adjunct Faculty Member: Karen Wheelless

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Adjunct Professor Karen Wheelless, with over three decades of executive and managerial experience with federal agencies, joined the Leadership Program's faculty this fall. She teaches the internship class for upperclassmen students.

Professor Wheelless has held top executive positions in the Department of Energy, the Census Bureau, and the Federal Communications Commission. She earned a Doctorate in Public Administration from the University of Southern California, and both an MBA in Marketing Management and a BA in Journalism from Baylor University.

In her professional career, Professor Wheelless found helping individuals or departments become award-winning high performers to be the most rewarding.



"I always felt my responsibility was to use the full range of leadership tools to help individuals and departments rise up to their best selves," Professor Wheelless explained.

With a desire to share all she learned in the professional world with young people, Professor Wheelless began teaching at the university level. She first taught military officials and civil servants at the National Defense University. She then moved on to teaching graduate-level courses at the University of Maryland for five years before joining the Leadership Program's faculty.

What Professor Wheelless most enjoys about teaching the Leadership Program's internship course is her students. She finds students "to be very engaged, thoughtful, and seekers of knowledge."

The SPA Leadership Program extends a warm welcome to Adjunct Professor Karen Wheelless.

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## Leadership Making a Mark



**Susanna Billings ('17) took her Leadership buddy, Amelia Faraco-Hadlock ('18), on a tour of the U.S. Capitol Building**



**Wes Young ('17) met with other DC student leaders at The White House to discuss sexual assault awareness and prevention**



**Members of the Leadership Program traveled to the NYC People's Climate March in September**



**Lulu Chaker ('16) snapped a selfie with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the Legal Services Corporation's 40th anniversary conference in September**

# LEADERSHIP IN PHOTOS



First-years presenting on their definitions of leadership at Retreat



Leadership students enjoy kayaking on the Potomac while removing waste from the river



Students showing off their Leadership pride during the first-year class



Students reunite at the annual Welcome Back BBQ



First-years are excited to receive an older "buddy" in the program



Leadership students of all ages cheer on the Washington Nationals