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Margaret Marr  
Program Director

What a wonderful semester!

We have started several new traditions and continued cherished old ones.

Our initiatives this term – the formal dinner-dance to toast our seniors, the cherry blossom monuments tour, the ropes challenge course, the senior retreat, and senior service project – are all so fantastically popular they are sure to be repeated.

Among our cherished

traditions, our first-year social action projects were once again magnificent, our TAs continued to do outstanding work, and our second-year mentorship program has some terrific success stories.

All of this was made possible by the enthusiasm and dedication of our much-loved Student Director, Dave Simnick.



I can't imagine this year without him.

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# A message from the Student Director

Thank You...

Dave Simnick  
Student Director

The SPA Leadership Program has made a great deal of change this year.

In most every aspect- - our academics, events, programs, outreach, publications - - we've changed. I believe it's been for the best, and I hope you do too.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication that most all of students of this program have given. Whether you've had a

role or not, you have an important title: you're a student of this program. The work you've done for us has made all of us better. Thank you.

If you had the opportunity to attend yesterday's formal, you may have heard me say how amazed I am at the quality of students.

Our organization, between alumni Roddy Flynn's outrageous comments and

For more see "Student Director" pg. 2



## Leadership listens to Obama



Anthony Miller  
staff writer

Nearly two million people, from different parts of the country and from all over the world, uttered not one whisper as history turned a new chapter on January 20 in Washington, DC when Barack Hussein Obama took the Executive Oath of Office and gave his Inaugural Address as the 44th President of the United States.

Dozens of leadership

students were in attendance, whether standing in the general section or whether receiving a special ticket through their job on the hill.

For sophomore Stephen Laudone the experience was unparalleled.

"It was overwhelming. Never in my life will I be at an event that large and enthusiastic," said Laudone. "Nothing like this happens anywhere else in the world."

### Continuation of "Student Director"

current senior Bill Debut's outbursts. In this role as Student Director, I've been fortunate enough to meet almost every student from all four grade levels. If you ever want to feel the way I do about our program, just ask your peers what they've done, what they're doing, and what they plan to do. It's amazing.

I want to give a special thanks to this year's Steering Committee. They've put up with four hour long committee meetings, my notebook addiction, and last minute

calls to be there for the program. I want to thank the Teaching Assistants as well. With their humor and wisdom, they have set the standard at a whole new level. I also want to thank Professor Marr. Our Program is going to reach heights we never dreamed of under her guidance. I have spent many hours talking, emailing, and working with our new professor, and her passion for this program, most importantly its students, is astonishing.

Thank you all for the great honor of being your Student Director for this past year. It has been quite a remarkable experience.

### Continuation of "Program Director"

Dave and his Steering Committee have worked hard in pursuit of our common vision of a more coherent, integrated, and esteemed program.

Toward these same ends, I have continued to bring academic rigor to our study of leadership.

The first year students studied Obama, Dr. King, and classical and modern theories of leadership.

The second years expanded their studies to negotiation, including between president and congress, looked at controversial issues in public policy, and examined social movements.

In the senior seminar, we studied leadership on the Supreme Court, reading works on the inner workings of the court, visiting the court to observe oral argument, and learning from knowledgeable guest speakers.

This fall, we are sure to continue both the fun and the rigorous study. Our new TAs for the class of 2013 have selected Harper's Ferry and a study of John Brown for

our first-year retreat. And they are planning lots of fun for welcome week -- for *all* our students.

Next year, I expect the second year curriculum to offer a choice of experiential leadership learning opportunities. The focus will be on an essential leadership skill: fundraising. And we have decided to try having a few seniors act as TAs for the sophomore class.

The juniors will continue to examine organizational behavior in the context of their internships. I hope to provide an avenue for juniors to bring speakers from their internships to share their experiences with the class and the Program. Also in the fall, I look forward to meeting with the seniors to plan their senior seminar.

Thus, still more good things lie in store. To continue on this positive trajectory, Stephen Laudone, an outstanding leadership student and compassionate friend to all, has graciously agreed to serve as Student Director next year.

I look forward to a fun and productive year working with Stephen, his new Steering Committee, and all of our fine Leadership students!

## Leadership builds trust, bonds on high ropes

Amanda Merkwae  
staff writer

On the lovely spring morning of April 4<sup>th</sup>—and by lovely I mean beset by a light 60 mile-an-hour wind—the SPA Leadership Program held a program-wide retreat at the University of Maryland high ropes course.

Around twelve SPA Leaders hopped in an auto-van eager for adventure and drove out to the UMD campus.

Upon arrival, everyone seemed a tad frightened at the sight of the tremendously tall wood structures they would be climbing in the following hours.

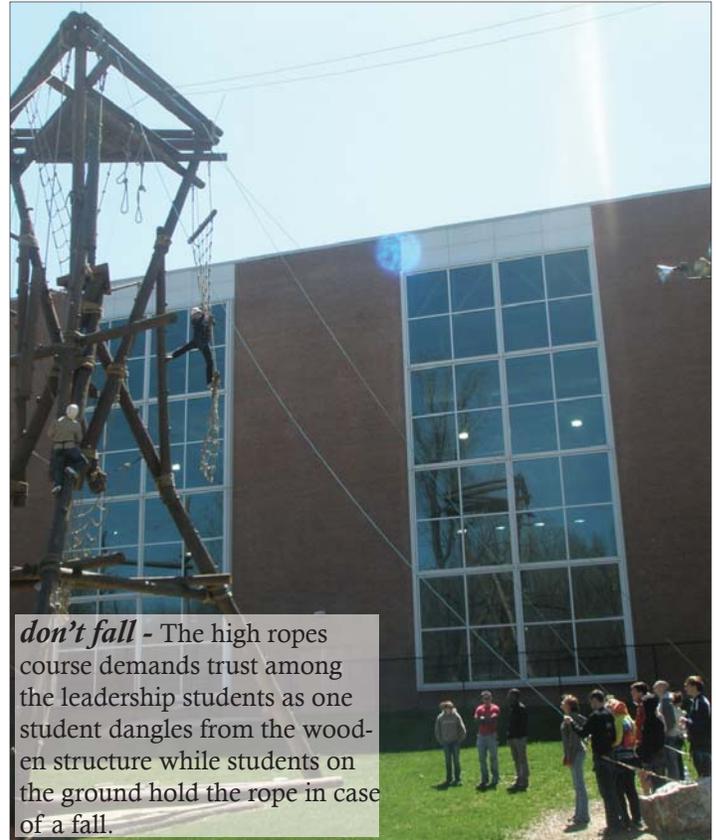
Keeping an open mind,

the SPA Leaders sat down for the short instructional session presented by the course's certified leaders.

Though their climbing harnesses may have been constricting on a certain area of the body, they certainly did not place a constraint on the level of fun and team-building that ensued.

"I really faced my fear of heights," says freshman Mitchell Duncombe. "It was a great experience that really pushed our personal limits."

When suspended four stories in the air, supported only by a thin rope controlled by the person belaying on the ground, students had to



trust the judgment and support of their fellow leadership classmates.

After everyone made valiant attempts at climbing the challenge tower, and many people succeeding, the group went on to a different activity in which they walked across different obstacles suspended several stories high.

To conclude the retreat, SPA Leaders had to strategize a way for everyone to get over a "team wall" using manpower alone.

Overall, the participants had a grand old time and would love to go back next year!





By Amanda Merkwae

This past year, the group's project was to significantly reduce plastic bag usage on campus--in other words, encouraging students at AU to "Bag the Habit."

Since lobbying the management at the Eagle's Nest and bookstore, AU is now the number one distributor of reusable bags in the United States out of all E-Follett affiliated colleges and universities.

In addition, the group implemented a plastic bag recycling program in the residence halls and on

April 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> they held a bags-for-a-bag exchange on the quad. By measuring the contents of the bag recycling containers, the Environmental Sustainability group discovered that approximately 4,425 plastic bags total or about 106.2 pounds of plastic bags were collected since the beginning of April.

The group was also able to testify in front of the D.C. Council on April 1<sup>st</sup> about the Anacostia River Clean-up and Protection Act of 2009 based on their own research.



By Melissa Chang

The Youth Empowerment issue group is completing its semester of teaching at KIPP KEY Academy, a school for the under-resourced students of DC.

They taught students grades 5 through 8 lessons on communication, teambuilding, trust-building, confidence, goals and community service through a class under the clever guise of "Group Games."

At their last class, they showed their students a slideshow of photos from their semester in the

class, evoking moving reflections and shout-outs of praises to one another.

The Youth Empowerment students saw some incredible transformations over the course of their program as some of their rowdiest students became the most outstanding and creative contributors to the class.

"When I signed up for this class, I knew I was gonna have to play games," said Takiya, an eighth grader at KIPP. "But these were different. These games were so fun and creative."

## Leadership Formal

April 24 marked the day of the first ever SPA Leadership formal at Maggiano's in Friendship Heights. Students and Alumni enjoyed Italian food and dancing the night away.





By Jon Fox

Modeled after the documentary *Born into Brothels*, the group decided to have group member Rhi Bakshi, who lives in India, give Indian children disposable cameras to take pictures of the poor conditions of the slums in India.

Upon returning for the second semester the group had countless photographs of the children's everyday lives in the slums.

To measure impact, the group chose to

donate proceeds to an organization called The Youth Technical Training Society, which provides vocational training to children living in slums so that they may rise out of poverty.

The Museum of Contemporary Art DC, who donated their space, they were able to produce an event with virtually no overhead. They produced bookmarks to sell and also sold copies of the photographs.



By Abby Matousek

The group sought to combat one of the city's most egregious problems by addressing the situation of homelessness and addiction through rehabilitation.

This idea evolved into an art rehabilitation program through the influence of Samaritan Inns Intensive Recovery Program, which promotes recovery from addiction and a return to a productive and healthy life.

They created a six-week program that brought volunteers from the American University community to Samaritan Inns to teach and manage art projects for the residents.

The Inner City Progress group's final event was an art showing and information session. At the event the group displayed murals from one of the art projects that they created for the residents.



By Anthony Miller

After months of working with a veterans health NGO that wasn't dedicated to the group's cause, the group decided to take the entire project on themselves.

The group hosted a special panel at American University on the health hardships facing veterans

and their families. The panel featured student veterans on campus, the founder of Stars, Stripes, and Student, and a paralegal who offered insight into the bureaucratic system for veterans' claims.

The 42 people in the audience were empowered to impact veterans' health according to a survey by the group.

## Leadership looks internationally at State Dept.

Melissa Chang  
staff writer

Leadership students engaged in a rare opportunity last February as they enjoyed a private tour of the State Department's Diplomatic Reception Rooms, learning about how the past Secretaries of State have utilized this historic landmark to host dignitaries and house some of the nation's most prized artifacts.

"When you consider the rich history and incredible tradition of the events that have taken place there, it is incredibly awe-inspiring," said Leadership Senior Bill Deban.

Leadership Freshman Samantha Green appreciated the tour for its lessons in leadership. Seeing how



*gather round* - Leadership students see artifacts like some of the first china collections imported to the United States, silver spoons crafted by our Founding Fathers, and priceless artwork and furniture that countless public figures still use today. [photo by Margaret Marr]

much time and money it takes to create such an atmosphere to entertain and engage foreign dignitaries proved to her the importance of communication for successful leadership.

"It's important to make people feel welcome," said Green - "making people feel comfortable enough to compromise and discuss."

Many students were

exhilarated at being in such a politically sacred spot as they began thinking more about the great leaders of our past.

Leadership Sophomore Emily Beyer enjoyed learning about the changes that the State Department underwent through its many hosts - not only policy changes but also how various Secretaries of State conducted affairs in the reception rooms.

"The tour guides had all been there under at least a few secretaries, and offered interesting insights into the differences in style between all of them," said Beyer.

The tour served as a great day trip away

from the classroom for the Leadership students. Leadership Freshman Jesse Schwab said, "It was exciting to share [the experience] with people that were just as enthusiastic about the historical significance."

Moreover, the tours proved to be a great opportunity for upperclassmen and lowerclassmen to get connected as they spent practically the entire day together, from surfing the metro to ooh-ing and aah-ing over the plush rooms and then grabbing a late lunch together afterwards.

After such success, the Leadership students look forward to future adventures together.



[photo by Leslie Kodet]

# The final retreat: reflections of the class of '09

Jon Fox  
staff writer

After a year many spent apart, the Leadership Class of 2009 came together on January 31 to embark on a retreat.

Many students spent the last year abroad and as a result, didn't have an opportunity to catch up in quite some time.

In an effort to set the tone for a fun weekend, the seniors' first stop was the bowling alley. After bowling a few rounds and catching up with one another, they journeyed to The Melwood Retreat Center nestled in the woods of Nanjemoy, Maryland.



**final hoorah** - Their last time all together, the seniors enjoyed a weekend full of bowling, leadership games, animal type tests, and overall bonding. They ended retreat on a serious note, contemplating the direction the program should take in the future. [photo by Margaret Marr]

After arriving, the seniors played an energizing game of football. Many still have the injuries to prove it.

One of the highlights of the first day was when each student retook the animal test. As many recall, the animal test is a survey that group's personality traits into one of four groups, each with a respective animal name.

Several seniors were surprised to find that their animal type had not changed in four years.

Afterwards, the retreat took a more reflective tone.

They discussed what direction the Leadership Program should take.

Many seniors felt that more focus was needed in the program as well as a descriptive mission statement providing a basic outline of the

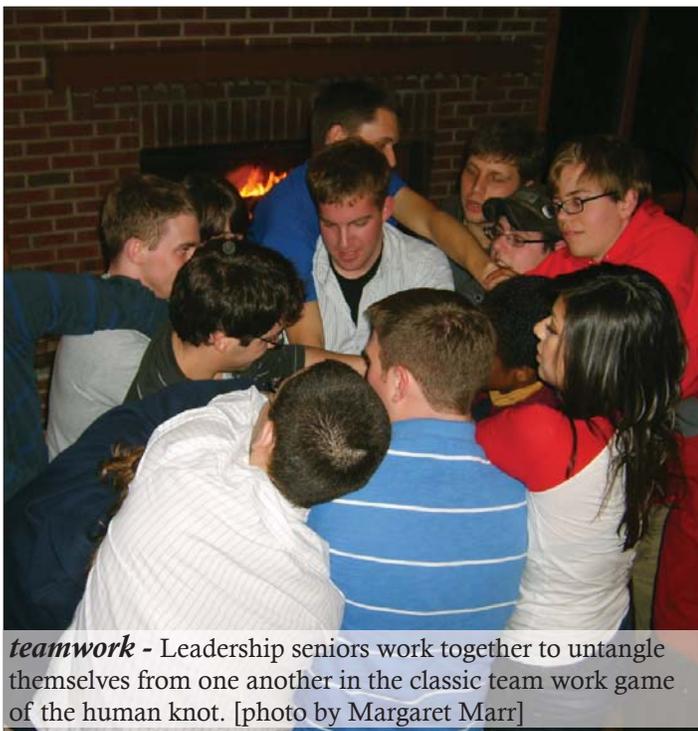
purpose of Leadership.

After providing constructive criticism, the seniors wrote their regrets down and threw them in the campfire—letting them go forever.

On the final day, the students expressed their appreciation in a gratitude circle and reflected on the weekend and the past four years.

They agreed that ultimately, the program is an opportunity for strong individuals to come together as a group to achieve a common goal.

Unlike many other classes, Leadership is unique in that it lasts for four years and as a result, the friendships last forever.



**teamwork** - Leadership seniors work together to untangle themselves from one another in the classic team work game of the human knot. [photo by Margaret Marr]

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## New Director shares big ideas for future

Laudone reflects on past year and looks to the future for new plans

Stephen Laudone  
New Student Director

I cannot even begin to express how rewarding and fun it has been working with this year's Steering Committee as the Mentorship Committee Chair. These individuals are diligent, extremely reliable and dedicated to the success of the Leadership Program.

In addition, Director Professor Marr and Student Director David Simnick have been an incredible tag-team as they worked hard to improve the Program's quantity and quality of events, programs and curriculum and genuinely reached out to all members of the program for their input and advice when instituting changes.

I truly believe that the successes of this year's Steering Committee coupled with the awesome work being done by the four classes will propel us into a new year with greater aspirations and dreams for L-Ship.

I am very excited to be



spearheading that effort along with a fantastic new Steering Committee, full of people who are energized and eager to make a difference. Next year, all Leadership students alike have the potential to further the value, recognition and respect of the Leadership Program.

Looking to the future, I know we can and will continue great traditions stretching from the freshmen retreat, to the sophomore mentorship program, to the newly instituted formal and senior recognition night.

However, I also believe that with the input of all students, the Steering Committee next year will strengthen the bonds between the individuals and classes, work to expand upon great traditions and support Professor Marr as she builds upon the existing curriculum and

works to address the needs of the students.

I ask that as you all read this letter, to consider how grateful I am to have worked on the Steering Committee this year and how much I am invested in seeing this program succeed and by extension see all of you succeed.

Your friendships mean so much to me and I hope that you will join me next year in this cause: by volunteering on various committees regardless of your year, by showing up to Leadership events, by putting time and effort into the class work and by helping build an accepting and tight community.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer either in DC or wherever you call home.

Best of luck on finals and I look forward to seeing you in August for another great year!