

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

VISIONS



VOLUME 19. ISSUE 1.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM WELCOMES CLASS OF 2016

by Eddie Shine '16

The entering Leadership Class of 2016 got their first full taste of Leadership on the traditional retreat to Antietam Battlefield over Labor Day weekend. The exciting weekend offered first-year students icebreakers, leadership challenges and dialogues, a historical tour of the battlefield, as well as relaxing river tubing in Harpers Ferry.

After their first week of college classes, the students departed campus Friday afternoon, eager and anxious for the start of what was, for many, their first camping trip. That evening, the Leadership Program did many fun get-to-know-you bonding activities, as well as had delicious snacks and s'mores over the campfire.

The Saturday morning tour of Antietam National Battlefield provided an appropriate complement to a book the students read over the summer, Donald T. Phillips' Lincoln on Leadership. Upon return, students engaged in a dialogue about the leadership lessons drawn from Lincoln on Leadership, as well as their trip to Antietam.

One of the most exciting parts of the retreat was the first full Issue Group meeting. Students found it exhilarating for the students to finally convene and

students were treated to an afternoon of water tubing in West Virginia before they departed back to campus.

Not only did the retreat serve to bond the new Leadership class, but it also served as a nice break from college life. Monica Murthy, a freshman, says, "I spent the weekend bonding with my fellow leaders and learning about the amazing people I would be learning with for the next 4 years." As the retreat was an "un-plugged" event, students had the rare opportunity to break free of technology for a peaceful weekend in the company of each other. Freshman in the program, Paul Wells,



The Class of 2016 flashes their animal symbols for the camera.

discuss the issues that they are passionate about and come to know the people they will be working closely with in the coming year.

Later that day, students engaged in a dialogue about the leadership lessons drawn from Lincoln on Leadership, as well as their trip to Antietam. Saturday was finished off with a night of making s'mores, taking a late-night hike, and telling ghost stories. The next day,

says, "I gained a lot of new friendships and created so many great memories... I am so proud to be a part of such an incredible program."

As exciting as the first two weeks of classes can be, the transcendental retreat to Jefferson, Maryland served as a time for students to reflect on what they're thankful for, their personal values, and how excited they are for the year to come.

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“We’re the generation
 We can’t afford to wait
 The future started yesterday
 And we’re already late.”
 -John Legend

PHOTO

“In 5 words or less,
 what does Leadership
 mean to you?”

P
O
L
L



“Pursuing excellence for oneself & others.”



“Supportive community, priceless life skills.”



“Always passionate, never passive.”



“Initiative to create meaningful change.”

—LEADING THROUGH SERVICE—

Saturday Morning Service Program-wide Anacostia River Cleanup

by Tyler Sadonis '14

An integral component to leadership is service. On September 22nd, the SPA Leadership Program came together for a program-wide service event. Students from each year of the program spent their day cleaning up a tributary in Riverdale, Maryland that connects to the Anacostia River. Working with the Anacostia Watershed Society, a non-profit environmental group that advocates for a clean Anacostia River, students cleaned up 104 bags of trash and 70 bags of recycling materials.

Emily Kvalheim '15, Deputy Director for Community Building on the program's Steering Committee, organized the service project. She thought the service project was a success. She says, "I was very excited that so many Leadership students gave up their Saturday morning to clean up and protect the Anacostia River and surrounding areas. Service is an incredibly important aspect of any leadership role, as it allows a leader to better understand the needs of her followers and how she can use her position as a leader to create more effective change."

The service project provided valuable lessons related to leadership. Students overcame obstacles trying to navigate uneasy terrain in their pursuit for garbage along the tributary. Tires, bicycles, and even an air conditioning unit required

students to work together to remove these items from the tributary to a designated disposal area. Students were particularly challenged when they found a fire hydrant which weighed so much that three students were needed to carry it.

Beyond the logistical difficulties of cleaning up garbage, students confronted issues of environmental justice. Marc Lewis '15, Deputy Director for Inclusion and Outreach on the program's Steering Committee, led the group in a discussion about the environment and social class issues. Students shared previous experiences in which they encountered environmental problems in their communities and collaborated as a group on how their leadership can address these issues.

The service project not only helped the community by removing harmful materials from an important source of water, but it also gave students an opportunity to connect with each other and consider their roles as leaders in the community. "Service helps us to connect pollution in the backyard of a school with broader problems like the inequities caused by environmental racism, leaving us better equipped to take on such injustices," Lauren Reiser '15 said in her reflection on the project. Cleaning up the Anacostia Watershed provided for a great kick-off to what will be an active year of service.



Elyse Preston '15 shows her strength in the blazing sun.



Members of the Leadership Program after finishing the clean-up.



Jack Szeltner '15, David Shadburn '15, & Ben Derby '15 pull a fire hydrant out of the river.



David Shadburn '15, Jack Szeltner '15, Nate Seeskin '14, & Alex Bradley '16 use teamwork to get the job done.

SOPHOMORE SOCIAL ACTION



The Class of 2015 gathers on the beach on the last day of retreat.

Reunited and It Feels So Good

by Madison Mullen '15

To develop and refine their second-year social action projects, the sophomore Class of 2015 enjoyed their second program retreat the weekend after the third week of classes. With accommodations in rustic cottages on the shores of the Potomac in southern Maryland near the Chesapeake Bay, the retreat allowed the class to reconnect after a long summer away from the Leadership Program.

The class enjoyed beach volleyball, kayaking, and spontaneous dance parties. More important, however, were the profound conversations had by the Class of 2015. Each student came to the retreat with an idea for his or her sophomore year social action project.

When asked about retreat, sophomore Caroline Ladzinski said, "These conversations were deeper and more thoughtful than any conversation I had pre-

viously had with my peers." She is not alone in her sentiments. The conversations were challenging, thought provoking, and intense. Students were forced to confront hard questions, and many students came away from the retreat with clear plans of action.

In reflecting on the retreat, Conor Siegel '15, said, "the sophomore retreat allowed me to get a firm grasp on the idea for my social action project, which I was honestly having trouble containing. It reaffirmed me. In the words of Thomas the Tank, I remembered, 'I think I can.'"

The sophomore retreat encouraged students to reflect on their personal missions to make social change. Each student will spend the year combatting a problem and finding a solution. The Leadership Program anxiously awaits the fruits of their labor.



Christine Porter '15 talks with a potential mentor.

Leaders Meeting Leaders

by Madison Mullen '15

The Leadership Class of 2015 came decked in business attire to meet their potential mentors at the Mentorship Reception hosted on October 3rd. The Mentorship Program pairs sophomores with professionals in the D.C. community. Two sophomore Mentorship Coordinators, Cassandra Henry and Jasmine Jones, worked hard alongside the freshmen Mentorship and Events Committee to host the event, preparing all the details, from food to nametags.

Structured like speed-dating, the "flash mentoring" reception allowed students to meet up to six potential mentors, and volunteer mentors to meet as many as twelve students. Students made excellent use of their "elevator speeches" they had practiced in class the week before.

To secure excellent mentors, Henry and Jones recruited heavily from Leadership alumni as well as professionals who had served before as mentors. Some of the mentors, such as Kelsey Stefanik-Sidener ('11) benefitted from being mentored in their own sophomore years in the Program.

Jenny Newman '15 participated in the Mentorship Reception. She said, "It was fabulous and I've met several people I'd love to network with and just share stories with because they're amazing."

The sophomore students will meet with their mentors several times throughout the course of the year. They hope to gain information, skills, and guidance on securing internships and entry level positions right for them.

When asked what he hopes to gain from participating



Cass Henry '15 & Jasmine Jones '15, Co-Mentorship Chairs

in the Mentorship Program, Gabe Menchaca '15 says, "I'm looking to gain valuable networking experience outside of the typical internship route. I want to build local connections that can serve as a base for my life after college."

The Mentorship Reception reaffirmed students that the work they are doing in the SPA Leadership Program is important. All of the students participating in the program are incredibly grateful to their mentors and look forward to working with them this year.

LEADERSHIP WELCOME WEEK

A Week's Worth of Welcome

by Maggie Brennan '16

On the first night that the Leadership Class of 2016 met, freshman students and teaching assistants alike braved the pouring rain for some get-to-know-you games in the lobby of the Mary Graydon Center at American University. The Welcome Week program for SPA Leaders started off with some damp hair and fun games as the new class learned each other's names and faces. After some whirlwind introductions, the group trekked into Tenleytown for some frozen yogurt and, more importantly, for some new and exciting conversations.

Later that week, the freshmen were treated to a picnic on the National Mall, which, as many exclaimed at the time, made them feel a part of D.C. On the trip, the teaching assistants supported students as they experienced their first ride on the D.C. Metro. Everyone made it to the Mall safe, sound, and happy.

The next evening of the program, the new students split up

into teams and competed with each other in a campus-wide scavenger hunt. The students ran around Mary Graydon Center, and, most memorably, spent an extended period of time searching for Professor Marr's office on the second floor of Ward Building. Following the scavenger hunt was an ice cream social with many of the older students of the program. The freshmen got the opportunity to ask upperclassmen about their experiences in the Leadership program, as well as what they could expect from AU on a broader scale.

"It was great being able to see what we'll be like in a few years," Allison Heller, one of the incoming freshman, says, "That we're going to be that good of friends and that close of a community is amazing to think about. Welcome Week went by way too fast, and I'm really looking forward to the next four year in Leadership."

Students' Voices



Alex Bradley '16: The Leadership Welcome Week events were the only events where I truly felt, well... welcome. It's so great to have the opportunity to meet so many involved people. It was almost too good to be true.

London Swift '16: I enjoyed the community that Leadership offered in the first couple weeks. I appreciated having older students to talk to, and feeling like even though I was completely new to AU, there was a group of people who cared about me.



Reiter Boldt '16: I enjoyed the immediate sense of community; everyone was very welcoming. The Scavenger Hunt was a great combination of meeting new people, discovering new parts of the campus, and free food.



Taylor Heath '16: My Leadership experience so far has been fantastic. Meeting all of these people, from the TAs, to the students, to Professor Marr, has helped me acclimate to AU. This program has been instrumental in my adjustment to college life.



The Class of 2016 gathers in front of the Washington Monument.



Rahi Patel '16, Nicole Fisher '16, Alex Bradley '16, and Winston Pigeon '16 on the National Mall.

THE LEADERSHIP FAMILY

Leadership BBQ Survives Storm

by Edgar Ortega '16

On August 26th, the Leadership Program hosted a Welcome Week barbecue. The BBQ brought together new students, older students, and alumni of the program. David Shadburn '15 and Harry Weiss '15, Events Coordinators for the 2012-13 school year, coordinated the BBQ. Weiss and Ian Toller Clark '12 cooked delicious food, which was quickly devoured.

As the BBQ got started, the early sunshine disappeared and rain started to pour down on the Leadership students. Luckily, there was a backup plan. Everyone headed to McDowell Formal Lounge. When asked about the event, Weiss says he was "delighted to see such a great turnout and a friendly atmosphere, despite the heavy rain."

After the race to McDowell, the event was quickly reset. It was a great event for the freshmen to meet one another and to meet other students in the program. Shadburn remarked, "When Harry and I walked back into McDowell Formal Lounge after standing outside in the pouring rain to get the grilling done, I can't tell you how happy I was to see all those people smiling, eating and hanging out, mixed among all different grade levels, and with all of the alumni who turned out."



Ian Toller Clark '12 & Harry Weiss '15 grill in the rain.

The event had a great impact on the Class of 2016. Paul Wells '16 states, "Despite the torrential rain, I enjoyed the BBQ a great deal. I especially liked when we moved into the larger common area and talked both as a whole group and in smaller groups. I remember meeting so many of the upper classmen and it was important to me to form alliances with them and learn from their advice. A huge thanks to David and Harry. The program looks forward to more memorable BBQ's in the future."

New Buddy Pairs Make Leadership Family Even Stronger

by Justin Murry '16

The transition to college can be a grueling process as freshmen struggle to find the balance between school, extracurricular activities, and having an active social life. The School of Public Affairs Leadership Program aims to ease the struggle for the freshman in the program by carefully pairing them up with an older "buddy" in the program.



Above: Three generations of a buddy family.
From left: London Swift '16, CJ Murphy '15 (Inter Class Coordinator), & Jean Cornell '14.

Jack Seltzer '15 recalls his freshman year in college and how his buddy helped him transition and deal not only with class work, but leadership as well. Jack says, "My buddy was integral in introducing me to dozens of upperclassmen Leadership students whom I am now close friends with. My buddy introduced me to the dynamic and fascinating field of DC local politics, with which I now work heavily with. And most importantly, my buddy has now become one of my best friends. I can easily say that the buddy pairing has been one of the most important parts of the Leadership program for me."

That sentiment is shared amongst many within the Leadership Program. Jihad Broussard, a freshman in Leadership, already compliments his buddy. He says his buddy has given him "specific resources such as different conferences that [he] should attend that would give [him] more opportunities to network in D.C."

While the transition to college can be tough and Leadership can be overwhelming, having a buddy by your side can make the road so much easier.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A Breakfast of Sorts

by Kayla Napolitano '16

The Leadership Program holds several "Liners" throughout the year. These Leadership dinners serve to bring students from all grades together. The first Linner was dedicated to talking about the transition to college. This Linner's theme was "Breakfast for Dinner."

As students ate a wide variety of breakfast foods made by the Events Committee, headed by David Shadburn '15 and Harry Weiss '15, students sat around tables and talked. Upperclassmen gave both formal talks and informal pieces of advice to the freshman class about adjusting to college, dealing with homesickness, and the benefits of taking advantage of the helpful resources American University has to offer for such challenges.



A group of leaders from all grades engages each other.

Leadership sophomore and teacher assistant Kendall Karr described the Linner as "...a great opportunity to mix classes and keep conversations informal." The Linner also gave the freshmen an opportunity to interact with older Leadership students in a casual environment. Older students gave positive tips on how younger students could face obstacles and make the best of their college careers.

"I enjoyed the Linner because it showed me that a little bit of homesickness is okay and that it gets better," said freshman Leadership student Chris Choban. The Liners exist as a way to reach out to the new leadership students and make them feel at home, involved, and included in the Leadership family.

PHOTO POLL: "What did you think of the first Linner?"



Melissa Ramos '16: "Great opportunity to meet upperclassmen"

Nolan Deming '16: "Fantastic advice for the coming semester"

Rachel Koretzsky '14: "Amazing chance to make new friends"

Jack Szeltner '15: "Learning opportunity for all"

LEADERSHIP IN PHOTOS

The **Leadership Program** encourages students to be **active members** in their communities. The photos below are **snapshots** of the action **Leadership students** are engaged in every day. **SPALeaders** from all grades **challenge** themselves and their peers to be **socially active citizens**.



A buddy family gets together for brunch.



Professor Marr, David Shadburn '15, and Student Director Stephen Bronskill sport their Leadership tee shirts.



Freshmen eat at the Linner.



Co-Mentorship Coordinator Cassandra Henry '15 speaks at the Mentorship Reception.



SPALeaders relax on the sophomore retreat.



Freshmen enjoy river tubing on their retreat.



The Publicity Committee gathers to discuss ideas for the newsletter.