



Frequently Asked Questions about the SPA Leadership Program

1. *How is the curriculum structured?*

In the first year, students complete *SPA 361 Leadership Lab I*. In that year-long class, they work in teams to research and propose solutions to a current leadership problem in public affairs. In *SPA 362 Leadership Lab II*, taken during the second year, students identify a public affairs issue, and design and implement a leadership project to address it. Juniors complete *SPA 391 Leadership Internship*, where they earn academic credit by completing an internship in any number of public and private sector opportunities that only Washington, D.C. can offer. The senior capstone class, *SPA 460 Political and Organizational Leadership*, examines seminal works from the leadership literature. Students also complete two elective courses in leadership during their undergraduate course of studies.

2. *What kinds of leadership opportunities exist for students?*

Outside of the classroom, students perform many leadership roles in the program. There is an official student club, (SPA leadership program steering committee), with many available leadership roles for interested students. Students also develop leadership development programs with American University's *Office of Student Affairs*, including rope courses. Students also organize many team building activities on their own during the academic year, such as occasional dinners and other fellowship events.

3. *What kind of welcome activities exist for students?*

All admitted first-year SPA leadership program students will be invited to participate in the *Serve DC Experience* from in late August, to help identify a public affairs issue students would like to learn about and help solve in *SPA 361: Leadership Development Lab*. More information will be provided to accepted applicants.

4. *Is it possible to complete the SPA Leadership Program and other programs and activities such as University College, Honors, athletics, student government, and studying abroad?*

Yes, it is possible. SPA leadership students are actively engaged in all these programs, and others, often assuming leadership roles in them. If admitted into the leadership program, your SPA academic advisor will assist you in building your course schedule.

5. *Who are the faculty and staff for the program?*

The program features five faculty members, including Dr. Paul Manuel (faculty director); Dr. Jim Quirk, (faculty advisor for the program); Professor Ayana Wilson (director of involvement at American University); and Professor Calvin Haney (associate director of student leadership at American University)



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The program is also assisted by offices across campus, including Olivia Ivey (SPA Librarian); Justin Harris (SPA Career Center); Marcy Fink Campos (director of the Center for Community Engagement & Service); and Kim Westemeier (Pedagogy and Instructional Technologist, Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning). All of the people involved in the program are sincerely interested in helping students develop their gifts to become caring and ethical leaders in public affairs.

6. *What is the SPA Leadership Portfolio?*

The *SPA Leadership Portfolio* provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their curricular and co-curricular experiences in order to earn a deeper understanding of how to use their gifts to make the world a better place. It is integrated into the leadership curriculum, and involves a series of four levels where students incrementally build the interactive online portfolio to showcase the leadership skills they learn here. At a minimum, students upload a resume and letter of introduction in SPA 361. In SPA 362, students upload a sample of their work. In SPA 391, students present information about their internship and other activities, including study abroad. Students may present their final portfolio in SPA 460, the program capstone course. During the course of the program, all students are invited to document and reflect on their growth as a leader in their personal leadership portfolio. Students also use their leadership portfolio as a virtual résumé and can take it with them after they graduate to become more competitive in today's job market. Kim Westemeier from the *Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning* can assist you when you build your own portfolio.

7. *What are the program learning goals?*

In its entirety, the leadership program is predicated on the following six goals. It seeks to help students to (1) develop critical and reflective thinking abilities; (2) exhibit responsible decision-making and personal accountability; (3) exhibit the ability to work effectively with those different from themselves; (4) demonstrate a commitment to public affairs; (5) demonstrate an understanding of group dynamics and effective teamwork; and, (6) develop a range of leadership skills and abilities such as effectively leading change, resolving conflict, and motivating others.

8. *What kinds of careers have past leadership students pursued?*

Students who have completed the certificate program have gone on to careers in law, politics, international relations, education, and public policy - a wide variety of fields. Students find that their experiences in the leadership program valuable in securing rewarding internships, graduate school opportunities, winning scholarships and pursuing fulfilling careers.