



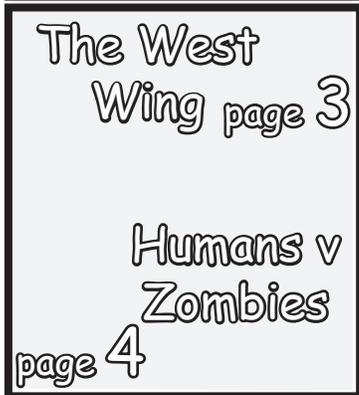
a look inside... O'Connor Invites Leadership Seniors to the High Court



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Save the Date!  
Leadership Turns 20  
March 24th at Chef Geoff's  
Cherry Blossom Monument Tour  
March 31  
Formal April 15  
Certificate Ceremony  
April 26

Leslie Kodet  
Publications Chair

To pursue their study of leadership on the Supreme Court, the senior class of 2011 took advantage American University's location in the nation's capital to watch oral argument before the Supreme Court of the United States, the only public display of this branch's important leadership.

Katlyn Miller, a class of 2008 Leadership alumna, arranged to have Justice O'Connor sponsor the seniors' visit to the Court. Miller has been working for the Supreme Court for the last two years before beginning law school.

Leadership seniors watched the high court face two questions on January 12: Is fleeing the police in a vehicle a violent and aggressive offense? Can the police create exigent circumstances to enter a property without a warrant? The intensity in the room grew as the justices entered and took their seats. Without delay, attorneys jumped into their arguments.

"It was a great opportunity to be able to



Seniors on the Court steps following arguments

see the justices in action," commented Kathryn Baxter, "knowing that we're going to study these specific people in a few weeks really brought a new dimension to watching the arguments."

Other students agreed with Baxter, and stated, "We caught ourselves paying attention to the interactions between the justices, and almost completely disregarding the arguments the lawyer was attempting to make."

For the most part, the justices stayed true to their rumored forms, with Scalia asking most of the questions, and Kennedy revealing little of his position on the issue. Sotomoyor, however, looked less interested than Thomas, who appeared uncharacteristically aware of the argument. Chief Justice Roberts was the only one who looked fully engaged through the whole two

hours. Aside from the place of their seats, the only difference in their ranks was that Chief Justice Roberts was always allowed to ask his questions before another justice. It is said that the Chief is the first among equals, and it appears this Court has kept that tradition.

In class the next week Miller discussed what she had learned about the justices from her two years working at the Court.

"They work as the ultimate team," she explained, "even if, say, Breyer, knew he was filing a dissenting opinion, he would still give edits to the majority opinion writer."

While the justices respect their differences in opinion, they hold their work and consequences of their decisions in such high

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## Leadership Anchored in Service

Amanda Merkwae

Student Director

From January 30th to February 2nd, three students from the SPA Leadership Program ventured with Professor Marr to Annapolis, Maryland to attend the 2011 US Naval Academy Leadership Conference. Students from various military academies, ROTC programs, and civilian leadership programs from across the country, and as far away as Poland, convened in Annapolis to share insights about the theme of the conference—Leader Development: The Cycle of Success.

The panelists and lecturers varied from Admirals in the Navy, to business leaders, to former government officials. Among the speakers were former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, former Pennsylvania Governor and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, General Motors CEO Dan Ackerson, and the US Naval Academy Director of Admissions Captain Angela Cyrus. Each group of speakers was followed by a discussion-based breakout session that allowed students to reflect on their own leadership development and share ideas in small groups.

Navigating through the diverse interpretations of leadership was the highlight of the conference for Lauren Hickey, a sophomore in the Leadership Program. She explained, “It was interesting to listen to completely different perspectives from what we hear at AU. But by the end of the conference I realized that while speakers’ viewpoints were varied, the overall message about how to be a great leader did not.”

One of the consistent messages that reinforced by all of



Students L. Hickey, A. Merkwae and K. Baxter, flanked on left by Hickey’s brother and on right by Midshipman escort

the speakers was the importance of maximizing strengths while leading or managing an organization.

Leadership author and consultant Marcus Buckingham kicked off the conference with an engaging presentation that highlighted this need to capitalize on personal and organizational strengths instead of spending time trying to fix every weakness. The idea that organizations should invest in the strengths of its members or employees links directly to the best-selling book *Strengths Based Leadership* that is featured in the curriculum of the SPA Leadership Program’s sophomore year.

In addition to varied styles of leadership, Leadership senior Kathryn Baxter who also attended the conference commented that studying the cultural differences between the military and civilian way of life was fascinating in itself. But looking past the military uniforms, the civilian dress, or the civilian university name listed on attendees’ nametags, all of the conference-goers shared one thing in common—a deep commitment to service.

As this large group of young adults convened to learn about leadership from one another, it became clear that the next generation of military officers, social entrepreneurs, and social justice advocates were especially eager to serve the country as leaders.



L. Hickey, A. Merkwae, K. Baxter and Escort tour the campus

## Seniors Take Their Final Retreat

Leslie Kodet

Publications Chair

The Leadership Class of 2011 once again found common ground on their final overnight retreat. On this January retreat the common ground was: how to stay warm.

Overcoming the 20 degree weather, the seniors spent much of the afternoon outside exploring the grounds, playing ultimate Frisbee, challenging each other to break the ice on the lake, and then going together for a stroll through the woods of Nanjemoy, Maryland. After initially finding a common ground in the cold, program seniors reconnected with each other, making friends out of long held



*L. Kodet and T. Empson reconnect on retreat*

acquaintances.

Returning to the cabin around sundown, the class circled near the fire to elaborate on their year apart, post-graduate plans, and officially welcome to the group two Class of 2012 early graduates, Nick Armstrong and Student Director Amanda Merkwa.

The cooking team improvised a delicious dinner, as not even the oven wanted to properly heat up. After dinner the seniors played CatchPhrase and Bananagrams before getting down to business.

They discussed what they learned through their years in the Program, not only from the curriculum and projects but from each other. "We learned to work with different types of people such as in groups, individually, with professors, and people outside the AU community with a defined leadership position, as well as critique yourself in varying situations" said Emily Beyer.

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*Seniors gather before exploring the woods*

## West Wing Marathon

Evan Brown

Guest Writer

To watch an SPA Leadership Program favorite, "The West Wing" members of the Leadership Program gathered Friday night January 28th in the Letts Sky Lounge. Although many attendees were West Wing regulars, having watched all seven seasons (and some multiple times), others were newcomers to the show, eager to dive into the popular political drama.

"I'd surprisingly never seen the

show before," said first year Peter Goelz. "Seeing as pretty much everybody else here at AU watches it, I figured it was a good opportunity to start."

Josh Halpren, a freshman and veteran West Wing watcher, was more than happy to sit in on a few episodes.

"The West Wing is just such a great show," said Halpren. "Even though it's not always realistic, the witty banter is very entertaining. CJ Cregg can make any day better. You want to know what I did while trapped in my

house for two weeks during Snowpocalypse [2010]? Two Words: West Wing. All 7 Seasons."

The 10 hour marathon started from the pilot episode of the first season, so fans would be reacquainted with their old WW favorites and those unfamiliar with the show could be introduced to the Washingtonian archtypes: Josh, Toby, Sam, C.J., Leo and President Bartlett.

## Leaders Play a Game of Extreme Tag

Tommy Hunt  
Events Chair

On the 3rd Sunday of the semester, twenty-five leadership students gathered to organize a Leadership first: a game of Humans vs. Zombies. A more intense version of the childhood game “Tag,” Humans vs. Zombies pitted classmate against classmate in a weeklong game of extreme tag.

Each participant was given a “target” on Sunday and the game began promptly Monday morning. The goal was to use a marker to tag each target before you are tagged by another player. Once tagged, you are out of the game. “It was insane,” remarked Freshman Peter Goelz after he had been tagged, “I couldn’t let my guard down. I was on edge the entire time.”

Some SPALeaders took the game to

a whole new level, wearing hooded sweatshirts, long pants, and even gloves to prevent from being tagged. Sophomore TAs Kathryn Braisted and Tom Schad could not be found without a trusty Sharpie marker in their back pockets the entire week.

Professor Marr was prompted to send a cautionary email after two students were tagged in separate meetings with her. “At our Wednesday morning first-year TA meeting, a first-year student jumped out of a closet in Ward 300 to tag one of the TAs,” Marr exclaimed.

As the week drew to a close, only a few Leaders remained in the game. When suspense hit an all-time high, Leadership junior

and SG President, Nate Bronstein tried to leave campus to avoid being tagged. Little did he know, freshman Evan Brown was close on his trail. A high-speed foot chase broke out, ending when Brown skillfully threw his marker successfully tagging Bronstein. Although disappointed he was tagged, Bronstein exclaimed, “I didn’t go down without a fight.”

The game of Humans vs. Zombies came to a close a week later when freshman Rachel Koretsky tagged classmate Brown, winning the game. “It is exciting and relieving at the same time. In the moment, adrenaline was so high,” said Koretsky with a big smile.

As Koretsky goes down in the history books as the first Humans vs. Zombies champion, the rest of the Leadership class is looking forward toward games. Maybe next year, Professor Marr will join in.

## Senior Retreat

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Continuing this thought Andy MacCracken agreed and added, “We learned to reflect and be one another’s emotional resources.”

“The Program,” commented Armstrong, “specifically the first and second years teach us to be realistic about setting goals and understanding our personal and group capabilities.”

After looking at past experiences together, it was time to individually reflect on the previous semesters in the Program. After writing down all their Leadership-related regrets, the students bundled up again to huddle around the outside fire, and burn their regrets. This symbolism of letting go of the past brought the class closer than ever, to release any lingering feelings from the past, and look ahead to the future with a clean slate.

Jonathan Baker commented during reflections on the Program that, “Leadership made a five thousand person campus feel small.”

Kristen Pionati agreed, and admitted, “I would not be the person I am without this Program.”



*N. Armstrong, M. Miraglia, D. Shorts and E. Beyer chat while exploring the wilderness*

## Supreme Court

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regards to collaborate to make the strongest decision possible.

Andy MacCracken, former Student Government President, joked of his own leadership lessons, commenting, “If only we worked that well in our first year project groups, maybe we wouldn’t have had the final scramble to get everything together in time.”