Senior class is energized by curriculum

Each year the senior class collaborates with Program Director Margaret Marr to produce an innovative program of studies that serves as the culmination of their four years of work and prepares students for their post-graduation plans, whatever they may be. This year the seniors chose four core areas to explore: leadership in crisis, failed leadership, admirable leadership attributes and practices, and whether and how leadership might be gendered.

With the assistance of Professor Marr, students prepared for and taught engaging fifty-minute lessons within those four topics. Lessons included, for example, the recent scandal in the Penn State athletic department under crisis leadership, the cult leadership of Jim Jones under failed leadership, and the leadership of Sandra Day O’Connor and the effect of role models and mentors under admirable leadership.

In addition to the presentation, the curriculum integrated other innovative elements including an e-portfolio to demonstrate the students’ most valuable activities and chief accomplishments in each of the four years of the Leadership Program.

For more see “Senior Class” pg. 3

DC Watershed cleanup unites seniors

Leadership seniors collected litter in an effort to beautify and clean the Little Falls Watershed for their class-wide service project. Jennifer Jones played a crucial role in securing the site surrounding the intersection of River Road and the Capital Crescent Trail.

The seniors worked in small teams to cover the greatest area most efficiently. They found items covering the spectrum of waste and recyclables. After collected the varied articles, students worked to separate them to recycle as many resources as possible.

Erin Cady, Tom McNutt, Phil Cardarella, and Ryan Carter discovered a couch that had been left beside the trail. Although finding a couch can be disheartening, it opens the door to change. One of the watershed organizers said that she would make sure that the county government disposed of it properly.

The project was planned entirely by students of the senior class who worked collaboratively to pick a project that would contribute to their community and help instill a habit of volunteering, to act locally for global change. In a world that is confronted with serious environmental degradation, service projects such as this one help to prepare students to take local action that can make a global difference.

Like the senior retreat, the event provided the opportunity for the seniors to reconnect after the busy semester, and make lasting memories to bond together as a class as they brighten their community through a core principle of the Leadership Program: service.
Sophomores make a big impact with service projects

Jesse Schwab
Publications Staff

During the second year of the Leadership Program, students tackle their own social action projects. Each student identifies a social issue of concern to them, researches it, and then designs and implements a project to address the issue. This year’s sophomore class produced many successful projects. Here are three of them:

Afterschool Chess Program
David Shirbroun
David identified education inequality and afterschool safety as his target problems.

“With the knowledge that many kids in DC do not have some of the same afterschool enrichment opportunities that I, and probably many other Leadership kids, enjoyed at a younger age, some kind of fun and educational afterschool activity seemed like a great choice,” he said.

David created an after-school chess program. As an elementary and middle school student, he played chess, so he appreciated what a fun and enriching activity it could be for other students. He taught students at the Columbia Heights Youth Club on Tuesday afternoons throughout the spring semester. The program has been a huge success.

“Some kids progress at faster rates than others, but it’s always nice to see returning students who are excited about the game and new students who are eager to learn!” David said.

Exquisite: Beauty is Disability
Ki’tay Davidson
For her sophomore project, Ki’tay produced an event entitled “Exquisite: Beauty is Disability.”

The project included an education panel followed by a performing art show. Speakers at the education panel included: a sexuality and relationship educator; a feminist sexuality educator; a professor at the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University; and the outreach Coordinator of the U.S. International Council on Disabilities.

The event attracted more than 80 participants and media coverage from the American Association of People with Disabilities and the Day in Washington Disability News website.

Teen Advisory Council at the Southern New Jersey Ronald McDonald House
Rachel Korestky
Rachel created the Teen Advisory Council at the Ronald McDonald House of Southern New Jersey to address the lack of teenage involvement in community service. The 28-member council raises funds and plans activities for children and families whom Ronald McDonald House serves.

Rachel gathered the council members, who were selected through an application and interview process, from 15 different high schools in the southern New Jersey area. Council members raise funds throughout the school system by organizing large-scale, in-school and multi-school fundraisers. For example, this spring the Teen Advisory Council organized a bowling event called “Spare Some Love,” which attracted over 300 attendees and raised over $6,000.

Rachel said, “My social action project has been the most meaningful part of my sophomore year.”

Environmental Impact of Meat Consumption
Cristina Kladis
Cristina created a documentary about the environmental degradation caused by factory farms. Her persuasive grant applications earned her ambitious project financial support from AU’s Environmental Sustainability Fund as well as the Leadership Program’s Alumni Fund. Having never made a video before, she taught herself everything she needed to know to create an educational and engaging 40-minute film. She secured interviews with government officials, activists, citizens, and students to create a well-balanced perspective. Taking a risk and reaching out, she even contracted a pilot to fly her over some factory farms to provide aerial footage. Noting that she has been raised not to be overly boastful of herself, Cristina said, “I’m proud of myself.”
A message from the Program Director

Margaret Marr
Program Director

2012 is special. The class of 2012 entered AU as I became the new faculty Director of the SPA Leadership Program in 2008. What a long way the Program has come in those four years! What magnificent growth I have seen in our students and their many accomplishments.

The class of 2012 is the first group to brave the new sophomore curriculum that brought extraordinary individual social action projects, cultural challenges, life skills, and senior teaching assistants. They are the first to benefit from adjunct professor extraordinaire Jackie Norris’ instruction in the third-year internship seminar, which began to explore organizational behavior theory in its core curriculum four years ago.

Members of the 2012 class are the beneficiaries of the retreats added to the sophomore and senior year curricula, as well as the formal dinner-dance inaugurated when they were first-years. They enjoyed the addition of river tubing, laser tag, ropes course challenges, and program-wide themed dinners to our program events.

This class is the first to participate in the “flash” mentoring reception, which allows students and mentors to network and kick-off the sophomore mentorship program.

For more see “Director” pg. 8

A message from the new Student Director

Stephen Bronskill
Student Director

I never thought of myself as a leader before this program. After three exciting years in Leadership, this program has been my home away from home and an incredible community that has supported me in opportunities on and off campus. This year, I look forward to building on the Leadership Program’s phenomenal success in empowering the next generation of leaders to create change on a national stage.

The Leadership Program has given so many others and me the chance to pursue our passions and connect with an amazing group of young leaders. Through a freshman social action project, my issue group and I partnered with Lifepieces to Masterpieces to set up an environmental education class in Northeast DC.

This Program empowered me to apply for and win a Udall Scholarship for Environmental Policy in my sophomore year when I also served as a teaching assistant for the freshman class.

In my junior year, with the support of the Leadership community and the fantastic Leadership internship class, I was able to live my dream of interning at the White House and further my commitment to public service.

After a semester abroad in India, I am looking forward to a great year ahead. As the Program enters its 22nd year of training the next generation of public service leaders, I am confident that a diverse steering committee along with a talented pair of teaching teams will collaborate to make the Program more inclusive to all students and strengthen the Program’s commitment to service and social justice.

I have great hopes for the future that a committed community of leaders striving for a more just and equitable world will be able to overcome the challenges the 21st century has to offer. The Leadership Program is where we start to explore what about leadership piques our curiosity, how we can learn more, and most importantly how we can use it as we venture forth on our many paths to bring the positive change we’ve been taught to inspire.

“As an education major, I cannot wait to get involved in curriculum development senior year,” said rising senior Danna Hailfinger ('13).
The Poverty issue group ended the semester having successfully completed four care packet distributions around DC.

The group set out with the aim of getting out into DC and tackling the problem of homelessness.

They decided that they would distribute care packages that contained dental supplies, warm socks, some food and information about social services in the area.

Through soliciting in-kind and financial donations from businesses, organizations, individuals, relatives and classmates, the group gathered a budget sufficiently ample to hold more distribution outings than expected.

Other AU students including some Leadership Program members joined the issue group in their distribution efforts, despite frigid cold weather.

Cold Sunday morning walks around DC aren’t everyone’s ideas of fun but as Emily Kvalheim said, “We all really enjoyed being together, doing good things.”

The Politics & Empowerment issue group focused their efforts on the struggles facing recently released prisoners reentering society.

The group created an awareness campaign, “Rights for Returning Citizens,” featuring an eight-video series on YouTube and a Facebook page.

The group also volunteered at the Offender Aid and Restoration Center at Shadd Elementary School teaching these returning citizens necessary computer skills. Community involvement was important to the group; they focused on getting AU students to volunteer, including connecting Alpha Phi Omega volunteers with returning citizens. Additionally the group established a relationship with AU’s Freshman Service Experience so that students may volunteer with returning citizens in the future.

You can find the group’s Facebook page here: http://www.facebook.com/Rights4ReturningCitizens

The Gender and Sexuality issue group took on the FDA’s prohibition against accepting blood donations from men who have sex with men.

The issue group identified this as an outdated and discriminatory policy, and sought to raise awareness about the policy.

The group created a website (redisintherainbow.com), a Facebook group, a Twitter page and a YouTube video to get the word out.

In conjunction with their awareness campaign, they created a Change.org petition.

Their petition already has over 400 signatures. The group also had an article published on the Huffington Post blog.

You can find the group’s Facebook page using the search term “Red is in the Rainbow.”

Or you can follow them on Twitter at @redintherainbow.
The Civil Rights and Diversity issue group produced an expert panel event called “Don’t Forget the T: Violence Against the Transgender Community in DC.”

The discussion was intended to raise awareness about a string of violence against transgender people in DC and facilitate greater communication between the transgender community and the Metropolitan Police Department.

Speakers included Ruby Corado and Jason Terry from the DC Trans Coalition, Jessica McKinnon who has served as the Chair of Capital Trans Pride, as well as two officers from the Metropolitan Police Department’s Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit.

With transgender rights advocates and law enforcement representatives in one room, they discussed tough issues and provided invaluable insight into this alarming problem.

For more information about their April 15th event and to get involved in the fight for transgender equality, feel free to contact the Civil Rights and Diversity issue group by contacting leadership@american.edu!

The Environmental Sustainability Issue Group worked for months to develop a recycling curriculum to present to 3rd and 4th graders at Elsie Whitlow Stokes Public Charter School. The group decided to tackle the problem of a lack of recycling programs in DC schools, by increasing awareness of recycling and sustainable practices among elementary school students.

The group’s first lesson tackled the question “What is recycling?”, explored which materials were and were not recyclable, and had students create posters to inform their fellow students about recycling. They read a children’s book written and published by group member Amanda Casoni about recycling.

The students had a more creative understanding of recycling than the curriculum had initially anticipated. “We set out a glass jar and asked them if it was recyclable. They said yes, but not for the reason we were expecting: they said you could fill it with marbles, or use it to store things. They didn’t just see recycling as a process, but as a way of repurposing,” said group member Laura Bruns.

The subject might seem stale to some, but the students were excited about sustainability. Teaching team member David Shadburn stated that as soon as he announced the topic, a student, with a beaming smile, exclaimed “Recycling? Cool!”

The Education issue group worked with Columbia Heights Educational Campus to bring students and volunteer organizations together to encourage high school students to participate in community service projects.

Teachers brought several classes through the lunchroom to hear representatives of 18 community service organizations from the Washington DC area talk about the kinds of volunteer service their organizations offer.

Represented organizations included: Amnesty International, a human rights watchdog organization; Environment Mentors, which pairs students up with mentors in order to create experiments about the natural world; Food and Friends, which reaches out to people living with HIV/AIDS by preparing specialized meals.

“I was really impressed with the number of organizations that attended and how far these seven students were willing to go to make this work,” said Ms. Elmore, the Career Developer for Columbia Heights Educational Campus.
A farewell message from the outgoing Student Director

Mitchell Duncombe
Student Director

There are any number of ways I could have spent my senior year, but I can’t think of a more rewarding experience than giving back to my Leadership peers. You bright, hard-working, fun-loving people are doing extraordinary things to make this world of ours a better place. You inspire me every day, and give me tremendous hope for our future.

The Steering Committee did an excellent job this year, and I cannot thank the members enough for their service. Your work is the fabric which ties this program together and creates the community we so dearly value. Planning events like a laser tag outing and Leadership Formal, connecting with alumni, setting up the flash-pairings of sophomores with professional mentors, managing the finances and our online presence, matching buddies, fundraising, and putting together the Leadership Visions newsletters, you serve an invaluable role in making this program what it is.

I also want to thank the teaching teams for investing so many hours into your students’ development—the freshman and sophomore projects were extraordinary this year and they wouldn’t be possible without your support and devotion. Anything I could say would pale in comparison to the way your students will remember you and your service.

I want to thank Professor Marr for putting her heart and soul into this program and its members. She goes above and beyond any professor I know to challenge her students to be better, and to be our biggest advocates. She makes us all better leaders as a result.

And to everyone else in the program—thank you so much for allowing me to serve as your student director, it has been nothing less than a remarkable experience. I’m proud of our many accomplishments this year and I’m excited to see where this wonderful program of ours is headed under the leadership of my good friend Stephen Bronskill. His enthusiasm, intelligence, active listening, and enormous heart will bring the program to new heights; of this I’m sure.

The Mentorship Program pairs second-year students with a DC professional in a field of interest to the student. These mentors provide the sophomores with advice, connections and a glimpse into the working world of Washington, DC, and the confidence to clinch their internship for their junior year.

Sophomores meet with their mentor at least three times throughout the academic year and often have the chance to shadow them in the workplace or attend events with their mentor.

The mentorship coordinators sophomores Megan Huber and Catalina Lillo started contacting professionals in the DC area in May 2011. During the fall semester’s “flash mentorship” reception, students rotated among several mentors, spending a few minutes with each one, whom Catalina and Megan had carefully chosen to match the students’ fields of interest. Noting the preferences of students and mentors, Catalina and Megan paired students with their mentors.

The student coordinators monitored the progress of these relationships through surveys and “the mentorship story of the week.” At the beginning of the sophomore class, students often described experiences they had in their mentorship relationship, which helped remind and encourage the sophomores to stay in touch with their mentors.

The program netted many successful mentorship relations this year. Several students obtained summer internships or met influential DC professionals through their mentor. Students who consistently communicated with their mentors benefitted the most from the program.

Zach Baldwin (’14), speaking of his mentor and his mentor’s partner states: “They are the first place I turn when I need advice about interviews, getting letters of recommendation, internship opportunities, or anything related to my professional development. And beyond that, they are friends that I can just talk to.”

Rising sophomores Jasmine Jones and Cassandra Henry will take over as Mentorship Coordinators for the 2012-2013 academic year.
Internships link in-class theory to the workplace

Students applied lessons on motivation and power to assess their real world work environments while interning in DC

Juniors intern on average 20 hours a week and take a weekly seminar that explores the theory of how organizations operate. Students compare organizational behavior theory with what they are observing in their internships.

Jose Morales, National Coalition for the Homeless
At the National Coalition for the Homeless is based in Dupont Circle, Jose worked principally on conducting research and facilitating the organization’s social media presence. The coalition aims to prevent and end homelessness and to protect the rights of homeless people. This internship has helped Jose to narrow his plans for civil rights work.

Sylvia Brookoff, Travel Channel
Sylvia served as the Programming and Development Intern at the Travel Channel in the fall semester. Her duties included researching and organizing shows, working within a content management system for online videos and completing research for Anthony Bourdain’s new show The Layover.

During her time at the Travel Channel, she attended departmental meetings to review new idea submissions, allowing her to gain an understanding of how cable network operates.

Sylvia found the internship class to be an excellent supplement to the internship experience.

“Professor Norris was a wealth of information and became invested in each student and his or her experience, offering advice and insight into management, balance and most importantly, passion for what you’re doing,” said Sylvia.

She further described Professor Norris as, “an ally, especially important in the fast-paced culture that is the DC workforce.”

Olivia Stitilis, United States Department of Education, Communications and Outreach Department
At the Dept. of Education, Olivia worked on projects with many senior staff and personally interacted with Secretary Duncan on several projects. She assisted in coordinating the Department’s local and national exhibitions, including an appreciation day for all Department of Education employees throughout the country.

Olivia described a few highlights to include working at two White House events and serving as Fareed Zakaria’s personal escort at the Department. Olivia’s experience was demanding but overwhelmingly rewarding.

“I was given a lot of responsibility at my internship and while that allowed for many incredible opportunities, it could also at points be very stressful and emotionally draining so it was especially helpful to have such a great class and professor as a support system,” she said.

Fourth annual Leadership Formal is a success

(left to right) Ryan Durgin (’14), Zach Baldwin (’14), and Dan Raymer (’14)
(left to right) Cj Murphy (’15), Lori Interliccio (’15), Allie Cannington (’14) and Dani Nispel (’14)
(left to right) Allie Cannington (’14) and Ryan Carter (’12)
Alumni connect with undergrads for successful reception

They have continued and will continue to benefit from, and contribute to, an enhanced alumni relations program, which now recruits almost half of the participating mentors from our alumni. It also includes an annual spring reception that helps our alumni stay connected to each other and to the program, and allows current students to network, helping them to land jobs and internships.

The 2012 graduates saw the Leadership Program kicked off its first annual Alumni Reception at Finemondo Restaurant in downtown Washington, D.C. this March.

Dozens of alumni, from the class of 1998 forward, and scores of current students enjoyed delicious appetizers while mingling, networking and reminiscing. Current students were treated with many familiar faces, as quite a few members of the classes of 2010 and 2011 were in attendance.

“IT was a great opportunity to see everyone and hear what all of my Leadership friends are up to,” said Nick Armstrong (‘11)

The first annual reception was certainly a success and it is sure to be a great event for all program members to attend for years to come.

The first- and second-year classes have never been better. With five outstanding senior TAs, the sophomores have never been more supported. As a result, their projects and accomplishments set a new standard for success.

The re-ordered first-year curriculum is now better understood by our students. The first semester focuses on leadership practices, the second on theory. In the spring, first-year students now work in literature groups, choose a book to analyze, and then use that literature to ground the many leadership theories we explore. First-year students continue to design and execute outstanding social action projects and learn tremendous leadership lessons in the process.

All that the Leadership Program achieved in this year, the last four years and the last 22 years is the direct result of our students’ hard and devoted work.

This past year has been a wonderful cap to an exceptional four years. Well done, SPA Leadership!