



a look inside.. A message from the Program Director



On PBJs and ICUs

Margaret Marr
program director

What a magic carpet ride! From Sharpsburg Maryland to Dubai UAE, from retreat to ICU, from power and influence to non-violent communication, my first semester with the Leadership Program has been eventful, illuminating, fun-filled and forever memorable.

All three classes have gone well this term. Whether on retreat or in class, discussing the Tao te Ching or Organizational Behavior, studying attributes of famous leaders or principles of effective communication, Leadership students can be counted on for lively and entertaining

discussions.

I am convinced that I could walk into any Leadership class, ask "What are the leadership qualities of peanut butter and jelly," and find forty-five minutes later that we are still actively engaged in the discussion, pondering meaningful attributes of effective leadership, and delighting in the paradox of significance and humor.

But Leadership is more than what happens in the classroom.

The Steering Committee



has worked diligently this term to build community in the Program.

For more see
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SPA Leaders in politics
From campaigns and conventions right up until Nov. 4, they got out the vote pg. 4



A message from the Student Director

An Awkward Family

Dave Simnick
student director

During Thanksgiving dinner at the Simnick's, my father insisted what we each

say something we're thankful for before we devoured the delicious food before us.

It was hard to concentrate with my giant-for-a-brother stealing my stuffing right before my eyes, but I mentioned how

fortunate I was for all my friends and family.

Wanting more clarification, my Grandma asked how I differentiated friends from family. I told her that I feel like I have many families, while many of the people inside those units are my friends.

I also told her that the SPA Leadership Program is one of them.

Leadership is a family. An organization in name, but a community of close relationships at its core.

These friendships are built by stressful group projects, impressive achievements, and personal growth aided by other students' constructive criticism and warmth. Many of my closest friends and confidants are Leadership students, and they will be the people who I keep in contact with after I move beyond AU.

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Junior Interns
Junior Leaders take active role in the district as interns, getting key experience pg. 8



Leaderships test teamwork at program retreat

Melissa Chang
staff writer

Just before the cool weather arrived, the SPA Leadership Program held one last outdoor event open to all four classes in an effort to foster connections between upper and lower classmen.

Held on Saturday, October 11 at the Amphitheater, this event promised “teambuilding activities, Chipotle burritos, and building seaworthy vessels,” says organizer Dave Sinnick.

While turnout was spotty throughout the event, everyone really enjoyed the bonding experience.

Dave Sinnick is credited with handling much of the labor as he built many of the props needed, from wooden



don't fall! - Skilled Leadership students maneuver freshman Melissa Chang through the mind boggling spider web. The students must pass through the web from one side to the other without using the same web hole twice. [all photos by Anthony Miller]

skis to platform and beam bridges.

The SPA Leaders enjoyed a day of creative games that pushed them to exercise their

teamwork, communication skills and patience. There was the “lava” to cross as well as a “spider’s web” to climb through.

Perhaps the most intriguing task of the day was the boat-building.

Three teams were formed – all of them with a mix of upper and lower classmen – and each were given materials like PVC piping, cardboard and plastic tarp; their task was to create a boat that could fare in a series of races and games in the Bender Arena pool.

While the building took far longer than the races themselves, the experience was certainly a new one for

many SPA Leaders, including myself.

When it came time for the boat races, it seemed that these “seaworthy vessels” were more reminiscent of the Titanic; nonetheless, the short time spent in the pool was very fun, wet and wild. After being sufficiently rowdy and quite messy, everyone dried off and returned to the Amphitheater for some much deserved Chipotle and a reflection of the day.

Despite the low turnout, those who did attend the event got a lot out of it: new friends, some rest from the intense midterm studying, and free food!

balancing is the trick-

Professor Margaret Marr and Leadership senior Tom Ports watch from a distance as freshman Tom McNutt battles the balance beam in a team building activity that required students to walk across gaps and planks. Since there were more gaps to cross than planks, the students had to help each other across and move planks using teamwork.



The impact was unpublished

Stephen Laudone
contributing writer

What did not make the evening news this election season or even the Colbert-Stewart election segment, was the impact that Leadership had on many of the program's members and as a result, the impact that Leadership students had on the election.

Senior Elliot Friedman worked with Linda Stender (D) for Congress in New Jersey's Seventh District. "What I learned from the campaign was truly straight out of our Leadership Laboratory, in that everything you do is about group dynamics, relationships and managing people," Friedman said.

Senior James Lynch served as a War Room Manager for the McCain team. He helped run a 24-7 media monitoring operation that involved monitoring over 200 newspapers nationwide, the major broadcast networks and a smattering of relevant blogs.

Bharat Krishnan served as



a press secretary for *Families for Obama* and he canvassed for Barack Obama.

Senior Kristian Hoysradt spent a week at the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado.

Sophomore Dan Shorts had the opportunity to attend the Republican National Convention as a Page and volunteered full time for McCain during the New Hampshire primary.

Sophomore Michael Monroy also attended the RNC as the winner of Si TV's "Crash the Parties' 08 with Vote Latino."

In total more than 20 students used their leadership skills, great personalities and political talent; the leadership students campaigned, argued the issues, voted and made history.

reassured that the future looks bright for our program and family under her guidance.

When you have some spare time, reflect on what Leadership means to you. What friends, maybe even family, you have within this organization. As I have mentioned this axiom to the Steering Committee frequently, the whole is only as strong as the sum of its parts. Our family is only as strong as its ties. And it has strong relationships.

Leadership is a family, and I am so glad I get to be a part of it. That's what I'm thankful for.

Continuation of "Program Director"

They have put on four successful receptions: for our welcome back barbeque, for our mentors, for our alumni and families, and still another for a professor visiting from Zayed University in Dubai.

Under the gentle and able lead of our Student Director, Dave Simnick, these industrious students worked hard to bring greater inter-class unity, organized a program-wide retreat, created opportunities to watch both conventions, ably paired second-year students with mentors and first-year students with upper-division students, launched new fundraising initiatives and created numerous opportunities for inter-class socializing, from soccer to simulated campaigns.

I think though, that the truer meaning and significance of this Program came to me this semester when not one, but two, first-year students had near-death experiences that landed them in the ICU.

In each instance, even though far from any Leadership activity, the fatally sick or injured student was accompanied by another Leadership student, a devoted friend, who ably navigated the medical world and emergency room to ensure the needed life-saving care.

In each instance, the Leadership community rallied to bring the love and support needed for recovery.

This Leadership Program is truly special.

It is special because of extraordinary students who make the Program.

It is special because of the love each of you brings to the other and to the world you are so dedicated to making better.

I am deeply honored to be among you.

I look forward to next semester, to continuing the work with the first- and second-year students and launching a senior seminar about leadership on the Supreme Court.

I will continue to strive to bring academic rigor as we study Barak Obama's biography, the art of compromise in Congress, failed presidencies, the history of social movements, and the theory and practice of leadership.

We will also continue to emphasize hands-on leadership experience not only as students work on their social action projects but also with a unit on simulated negotiations.

And we are sure to continue to build community across all four Leadership classes, arranging a tour of the White House, planning a ropes/challenge course, and hoping to orchestrate a formal dance to send off the seniors.

So hold on for all the fun that lies before us on this magic carpet ride!

note: Professor Marr is the brand new Program Director of the SPA Leadership Program. She joins the program with her impressive biography as both a lawyer and a leader.

Continuation of "Student Director"

During the week, I look forward to attending my Thursday night Leadership Intern class, because it's full of people who I've seen in the classroom and outside of it; through professional contexts and in times of enjoyment.

Our program has undergone massive changes in most every aspect this year, but our family ties have mostly remained unchanged, albeit one notable and great addition to our community; our new Professor/Director. I am

A weekend of friends who will last a lifetime

Mark Bittner
staff writer

From the bus ride over to a dreary campsite in the middle of nowhere Maryland on a Friday afternoon, through the bus ride back to American University on Monday morning, the Freshman Retreat was beyond unforgettable. It was "Kick ass, and [it provided] long lasting friendships" according to Nick Armstrong.

The nightlife provided the new SPA Leaders with much entertainment from a dance party and plenty of icebreakers taking place on Friday night, to scary stories and a long midnight hike taking place on Saturday night.

And to top it all off, there was plenty of great food.

"The food was great" Amanda Merkwae noted, "Dave and Professor Marr are extraordinary grillers, they were ballin.'" With an abundance of meat and vegetarian alternatives, topped off with



Welcome to the Jungle - Joined by their TAs, leadership freshmen come together as peacocks, Lions, Owls, and Koalas at the freshmen retreat. At the retreat the freshmen built communication skills and philosophically debated Lincoln's leadership [Courtesy Photo].

s'mores on both nights, "The food was great!" notes another Leader.

On Saturday morning, the SPA Leaders woke up early to embark on a trip to the Antietam Battlefield. Though some members kind of fell asleep or dozed off during the main trip, most can agree that the interactivity and an in-depth look at a historical landmark was definitely a unique thing to see. Topped off with an unplanned bonding session after the bus wouldn't start for quite some time, the trip to Antietam was a huge success.

Upon returning to the campsite, a long discussion on Abraham Lincoln began.

Though it received mixed reviews, the freshmen SPA Leaders can all agree that everybody finally bonded soon after, when the animal groups were assigned.

The Peacocks, Koalas, Owls, and Lions together

presented the TAs, Dave, and Professor Marr with presentations they would not forget. To make sure they wouldn't forget them, they were recreated and filmed upon the next class.

"I really enjoyed doing it twice, especially as a Peacock!" said a Peacock.

The Lions, though few in numbers, participated in one of the most original and compelling presentations in their rap and song, the Peacocks presented in a dramatic fashion, the Koalas explained why they believed they made great leaders, and the Owls spread their knowledge and gave new insight to leadership.

"They were all wonderful!" Professor Marr quipped.

The trip included a variety of bonding activities, some of which included nonverbal communication, another involved physically untying a very large human knot, and

of course, lest we forget the very entertaining skits.

Allison Kays remarks, "I thought it was hilarious putting makeup on Mark [Bittner], though I think he enjoyed it way too much."

It was on Saturday night that the issue groups got to meet together for the first time.

One thing will always remain a mystery on the retreat, and that is: What happened in one of the boys' cabins on the second night? Only the boys who resided in that cabin will ever know. "It was a once in a lifetime experience..." noted one of the boys

In the end, Carol Foster notes, "The end of the retreat only marks the first of four years we will spend together." Everybody is very excited to get working on their projects, and the year to come looks very bright. "We will always remember the retreat."

Sophomores create multi-year projects at retreat

Anthony Miller
staff writer

Sophomores had no idea what was in store for them this year as they headed out into secluded Virginia for the Sophomore Retreat September 13.

"Despite the fact that we had planned everything, we really didn't know what to expect," said Kristen Cleveland. "It was really different from freshman year."

Cleveland wasn't kidding either; they really did plan everything. The students comprised three committees—work, food, and fun.

What the group wasn't prepared for was the selection of their issue group projects.

On Saturday, each sophomore presented a heartfelt project in a three to four minute presentation.

The presentations were then voted on and put through a gauntlet of group work and



brain power - In small groups, students planned out a rough outline of a policy proposal to each of the project presentations. They created a timeline, budget, and approximation of how many students should be in each group to complete the project. [photo by Leslie Kodet]

planning.

As the projects were whittled down to five solid civic action projects, the students broke up into small groups to carve out the potential of each project.

The groups created a rough outline of a proposed plan to ameliorate the project, an estimated budget, a timeline, and an approximation of how many students would be re-

quired to take on the task.

"The process for choosing our groups was fun and I think we were all very impressed by the way Professor Marr went about it," said Stephen Laudone.

Before dinner that night the groups knew their projects and chose the groups that they wanted to work in.

However, the sophomore retreat wasn't all hard work.

The Friday night the group made it out to the site, they all played name games and had a brief introduction.

Not too long thereafter the friends were huddled around the campfire singing songs and bonding.

"It was nice to start from scratch, rekindle bonds, and forge new friendships within the sophomore class because we were split up last year a lot with our issue groups," said Laudone. "It's really as Bharat said, 'We really needed a forced vacation.'"

Jon Baker agreed and felt like the retreat provided a time for him to spend with his friends that he didn't get to spend time with outside of class.

This sophomore vacation was very different from the freshman retreat they experienced the year before.

"It was really interesting for me, since I went to both retreats," said Cleveland. "This year it mixed people up and gave us a new issue to bond over."



fun and games - Free time allowed Sophomores to rekindle bonds. [photo by Leslie Kodet]

Freshman issue groups

Environmental Sustainability

By Mark Bittner

American University has not brought up the necessary incentives and availability to allow students to recycle plastic and other disposable shopping bags. The Eagles Nest distributes over 8,000 bags per month and Subway over 20,000.

Good news in sight.

The Environmental Sustainability issue group is planning to launch a massive campaign with the goal of decreasing plastic bag usage on campus by more than 40%.

The group plans to purchase recycling bins specifically for plastic bags and station them in each of the residence halls along with academic buildings.

Furthermore, to encourage reusable bag usage, the group has designed its own reusable bag fashioning their slogan, "bag the habit, save a baby."

Group Members: Nick Armstrong, Mark Bittner, Tom Davidson, Mitchell Duncombe, Carol Foster, Amanda Merkwue, Alex Schulte, and TA Tracy Empson.

Human Rights

By Jon Fox

After the Human Rights Group researched various human rights violations, the one that seemed to move to the forefront and peak the interests of each group member was human rights violations in India.

Because of the country's size, level of economic disparity and the presence of both extremely rural and urban area, there are a host of different human rights issues that span nearly every demographic.

With the help of Rhia Bakshi, a native of India, the group intends to hand out 30 cameras to children in the Punjab schools. Those children will be taught how to use the cameras and with them the children will document their lives.

The Human Rights group will then display 10-15 of these photos at either

the Holocaust Museum or at one of the Smithsonian Institutes. A keynote speaker will accompany the display, and donations will be taken to provide education for Indian children.

Group Members: Sami Green, Jon Fox, Rhia Bakshi, Sam Sabol, Tom McNutt, Carley Wigod, Gabby Ryan, and TA Jon Baker

Inner City Progress

By Abby Matousek

Looking at the District it is easy to see the applications that a group like Inner City Progress could have in the city: gentrification, poverty, housing, homelessness, drugs, violence, crime and guns are all aspects of everyday city life.

With research and a growing knowledge about the city from their findings, it became evident that the problem which was most pronounced was homelessness.

In order to tackle this issue, the group came up with providing an artistic outlet for the homeless by teaming up with the Samaritan Inn. The group plans on bringing art supplies to the homeless shelter and letting people paint without restrictions.

The group found through their research that painting can be therapeutic. The group will also be using the methods of art therapists by having the artists create simple items such as a house and interpreting their work on a psychological level. The group is careful and says they aren't art therapists, but they certainly want to decrease depression amongst the homeless.

Group Members: Jennifer Jones, Allison Kays, Abby Matousek, Jesse Schwab, Nik Serpanos, Olivia Stitilis, Tess VandenDolder, and TA Andy McCracken

Public Health

By Anthony Miller

With the influx of veterans that will soon return home due to the proposed policy of the Obama Administration, this year's Public Health Group is

looking to a personal approach to help the mental health of both veterans and their families.

Coupled with the DC Metro Chapter of Operation Homefront, a non-profit, grassroots organization which helps wounded warriors and their families, public health is going on a speaking campaign to boost volunteerism for the organization that the issue group will be in charge of.

Furthermore, the group is planning on culminating their service with a signature project of a Military Family Appreciation Day where families will participate in bonding and team building leadership activities.

Group Members: Anthony Miller, Zach O'Connor, Alex Lubinsky, Josh Dubensky, Sara Aucker, Phil Cardarella, Collin Everett, and TA: Kristen Cleveland

Youth Empowerment

By Melissa Chang

The Youth Empowerment issue group is designing an after-school program that mixes experiential learning, like Project Adventure games, with leadership skills development.

Recognizing that many youths suffer from a lack of confidence, goals and interests, and communication skills, this program – to be called YEP for Youth Empowerment Program – will remedy the learning gap by bringing more life skills education to students.

Targeting underprivileged youths in either seventh or eighth grade, the issue group is hoping to work with the KIPP DC schools, which are a network of high-performing, college-preparatory charter schools that serve the most-resourced communities.

To be implemented second semester, YEP also hopes to host a final event with their students to display the youths' abilities and talents.

Group Members: Ryan Carter, Stephanie Eichmann, Rebecca Bucchieri, Nathan Bronstein, Melissa Chang, Rachel Lachenauer, Molly Greenberg, and TA Meg Miraglia

Sophomore issue groups

Adoption and Foster care

By Anthony Miller

The Adoption and Foster Care Group plans to hit the books hard next semester as their proposal will be to extend their research window before committing to a particular project outline.

The group's main goal is to provide a safe and stable home for children in the foster care system, and also to provide help to those children through the facility which would be set up here in the DC area. This all gets bound up with bureaucratic red tape since there are federal laws on adoption as well as the individual laws each state has enacted.

In their current research, the group has found that a primary problem in adoption and foster care situations is that parents aren't parenting, which leads to reunification issues later on.

Currently, the group is thinking that they will create a boarding school for foster kids. This will provide a stable home for children and possibly contain a family rehabilitation center.

Group Members: Caitlin Flynn, Rob masciello, Dan Shorts, Scarlett Doyle, Kristen Pionoti, and Samantha Bilotta, Jenny Land

Poverty in the US

By Melissa Chang

Some of this year's SPA Leadership sophomores have chosen to remedy poverty in America through a project on Appalachia, most likely in one of West Virginia's struggling counties.

Rather than take the conventional route of going into an area to do work, they are now exploring the possibility of "bringing Appalachia to DC."

Megan Miraglia, one of the sophomores on the project, explains, "We may work to bring a group of students from a struggling area of Appalachia to the DC for a week to experience the city, hoping that they learn alot and

come out of the experince inspired and motivated."

They are also looking into taking some oral histories and other works to put up an exhibit at the Smithsonian or another venue that would display Appalachia's culture and dilemmas. In these next few months, their team will go out into the field to collect research and see firsthand what Appalachia is all about, getting a better feel for the kind of work they should be doing.

Group Members: Stephen Laudone, Nirvana Habash, Emily Beyer, Meg Marigila, Tracey Empson, Kera Package, Leah Pope, Natasha Pereira, and John Sossalla

EACH

By Leslie Kodet

The Katrina Hurricane hit the coast hard, leaving New Orleans in shambles. Over 70% of the school buildings were deemed unusable. The system had to turn away thousands of students because there was nowhere to house the students during school hours.

The sophomore group will make a film team and go to New Orleans for about a week to film a documentary which will follow a small group of students through a day in the New Orleans school system, to show just how bad they have it.

They plan to take the documentary on tour across to privileged public schools across the nation to raise awareness and create a genuine interest in the problem from America's youth. EACH hopes to receive donations to help rebuild schools and find an income for better teachers.

Group Mmembers: Kristen Cleveland, Graham Vyse, Andy McCracken, Jon Baker, Ben Schorr, Andrew Welsh, Bharat Krishnan, and Kelsey Stefanik-Sidner.

Sowing Seeds

By Amanda Merkwae

Three sophomores have formed the group, called "Sowing Seeds: Growing Gardens and Environmental

Education," will focus its efforts toward implementing gardening programs into the science curriculum at local schools in an effort to foster a greater awareness of environmental issues among kids.

At this point, Sowing Seeds will begin by establishing contacts with staff in the DC Public School District in order to develop a sound infrastructure for the program by the end of the school year.

Their official mission statement reads, "Sowing Seeds seeks to combat the increasing environmental education deficit, especially in cities, by establishing gardening programs in schools across America. Student will take their lessons outside of the classroom by growing their own plants and produce. We believe the most sustainable thing we can do for our environment is grow a generation that can care for it."

Group Members: Leslie Kodet, Kathryn Baxter, and Betsy White.

SIBS

By Mark Bittner

Six sophomores have something in common, they are all part of SIBS, Supporting our International Brothers and Sisters. SIBS is taking the initiative to start a mentorship program in Guatemalan Orphanages.

Three of the members are fluent in Spanish, so a Spanish-speaking nation was a must, even though you don't have to be a spanish-speaker as a mentor. If necessary, the American University Spanish Department will translate letters for the orphans in the outreach program.

SIBS wants to set the model for a mentorship program all throughout the world. They want Guatemala to be an example they can use to spread to other nations. SIBS has high hopes and high dreams, and they look and sound confident in their abilities to do so.

Group Members: Kathy LaTorre,, Ellen Miller, Seth Gilroy, Caitlyn Chew, Samantha Zarrini, and Michael Monroy.

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Junior internships provide hands on leadership experience

Leslie Kodet
staff writer

This semester the junior class has internships all over the district, on the hill, in a non-profit or government agency, or in a lobbying firm. The semester long internship is a clear window into a possible future for the juniors. With the internship is a seminar, which is meant to give added insight and a time to reflect on their job and how the organization works.

Christine Hooyman interns at Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, a non-profit organization focusing on issues surrounding trade and globalization. She has done a variety of work ranging from publicity and promotion of the film "Battle in Seattle," research and production of a trade guide for legislators, and most recently some

post election projects. She said, "I've benefited greatly from getting some practical experiences...[and] coupled with the Leadership seminar, this intensive internship has allowed me much insight into the field I wish to work in!"

Other members of the junior class are interning at places such as the Human Rights Campaign, A Wider Circle, Emily's List, the District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Embassy of Israel.

Jenna Sablan interns with the DC Public Schools system in the Office of the Chancellor, on the Critical Response Team. If someone has an issue for the chancellor, it's Sablan's job to process the request, and work with the rest of the team to solve the case. These requests range from retrieving a lost transcript, getting paychecks to teachers, or notifying principles about complaints against their schools.

Sablan also worked on a project to identify problems with the new food service provider to DCPS schools. She and other interns would notify the central office of issues so the Chancellor's office could fix them as well as evaluate the status of the contract.

Speaking on the class, Sablan said, "I really enjoyed the opportunity writing the papers gave me to reflect on my internship...I realized a lot that was going on under the surface at my organization that I probably wouldn't have thought of if I haven't been taking the class."

The class isn't all about writing papers and self reflection, however. "I really liked when we broke out into small discussion groups based on type of internship... [it] gave the opportunity to find out about the differences between our internships even within the same field" commented Sablan.