



# LEADERSHIP VISIONS

American University  
Leadership Program Newsletter

School of Public Affairs  
Spring 2005

## Director Stiles Sends off Class of 2005

Dear Students and Friends,

If I were to describe this academic year in one word it would be intense. My Alpha Class as the director of the Leadership Program, the Class of 2005, is graduating. This is the first time the Leadership Program has had one director for the entire duration of a cohort. I have seen these students in all stages of leadership development. They have organized impressive events, they have performed community service, and they have studied leadership. Those are the tangibles; of the intangibles they have demonstrated loyalty, respect, and vision. I will miss them but look forward to magnificent alumni events.

This year's students have continued to build the Leadership Program into a strong, active entity, led by the students as they perform their "dress rehearsal" for the professional world. After you read their articles perhaps you will agree; these young people are destined for great things.

- Professor Sarah Stiles

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## Four Years to Remember

By Marc Malon, Class of 2005

Four years! You mean to tell me I've been here for nearly four years? I must admit it hasn't sunk in yet — the fact that soon I will be graduating from AU and the SPA Leadership Program. Wasn't it just yesterday that I moved into McDowell Hall for the first time? Wasn't it just yesterday that I was 18 years old, and the World Trade Center was still standing tall? Who is that guy in the mirror?

A lot has changed since I first arrived at AU, with me and the world at large. But one constant throughout my undergraduate career has been the Leadership Program. I remember when I first received information about the Program. I was curious, but I had been receiving a lot of information and was on overload. It wasn't until I saw Professor Stiles give an enthusiastic speech at orientation that I was impressed with what I heard, and decided to apply.

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## Steering Committee Sets the Stage for Next Year

By Jesse Olczak, Class of 2005

When you go camping, you often see signs instructing you to “leave it better than you found it.” This is a principle I remembered this past semester as I led the Steering Committee, SPA Leadership’s student officer system, this past semester. In terms of leaving things in a better state than when found, the members of this year’s Steering Committee certainly have achieved great things.

We now have a formalized structure for selecting future Student Directors, the students who facilitate the Steering Committee and communicate with Director Sarah Stiles. For the first time, we had an application process for committee chairs, resulting in the most qualified applicants assuming leadership. This year is also the first time in which the incoming Steering Committee met and worked with the outgoing Steering Committee on formulating goals for the next year. There is ministrative body to build on.

This year’s Steering Committee has done some great work. From the opening plenary session to the Senior Roast, now the Farewell Fiesta, they set the bar by which all future Steering Committees will be judged. They showed what leadership is not by word – but by action. The new strength of the Steering Committee is a testament to their hard work. To the members of the outgoing Steering Committee, thank you. It has been a pleasure working with you.

Next year’s Steering Committee has their work cut out for them, but I am sure they will be up to the task. From members of the current freshman class to former Student Director Amy Quemore, the incoming Steering Committee has the energy and experience to carry Leadership forward. At the helm, will be next year’s Student Director, Heather Botter. Her strong vision for the program will take Leadership to the next level. To Heather and the members of the incoming Steering Committee, I wish you the best of luck and I confidently leave the Steering Committee in your capable hands.

As you may know, I am graduating this May and have to say “farewell” to the Leadership Program. From my freshman community service project, AU Computers 4 Kids, to the Music 4 the Heart benefit concert, to my time as Student Director, my Leadership experiences have been some of the best of my life and have caused me to grow as a person and a leader. To Professor Stiles and everyone else who has made my time in Leadership as great as it was, thank you and I’ll see you all at the Leadership alumni reception.



Jesse Olczak served as Student Director for spring 2005.

### What are some Leadership Students doing this summer?

“Working as a medical management intern in a New Jersey medical practice.” - Jenn Bastian • “Doing a policy internship with Legal Momentum in DC.” - Ashley Mushnick • “Interning at Andrew's Air Force Base in the Flight Line Protocol Office.” - Alex Testa • “Hopefully redesigning the SG’s website.” - Ben Murray • “Managing a pool in my community.” - Jen Lombardo • “Tutoring children at an orphanage in South Africa.” - James Misner • “Working for an independent Democratic firm in DC.” - Adam Rosenblatt • “Being an orientation leader here at AU.” - Janice Smith

## Sophomore Class Fundraiser Benefits FLY

By James Misner, Class of 2007

On Saturday night April 16th, the Leadership Program sophomore class completed its year long project of holding a fundraiser. They chose to benefit an AU Club and non-profit organization called Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY). The class planned an event entitled "A Night at the Apollo", named after Manhattan's famous night club, which took on the form of a benefit concert.

The class beneficiary, FLY, specializes in giving at risk youth in Southeast DC the educational supports they need to achieve post-high school success. "I think that FLY was a good beneficiary because it gave us an opportunity to really help out the local community," said sophomore Chris Armstrong, "many AU students support FLY through the federal work study program." One of the main ways FLY staff engages their youth is through the use of hip-hop. Because of this SPA Leadership students designed the event around the different forms of hip-hop. There were MC's, DJ's, Spoken Word artists, etc.



DC rapper Head Roc performed at the benefit for FLY.

The event, held in American University's tavern and was advertised all over the DC area, required a \$5 minimum donation and raised nearly \$1,000 for FLY. Attendance at the event was lower than expected which will allow leadership students to discuss and learn how to better handle advertising strategy in the future. The night itself flowed almost seamlessly. In terms of the overall experience of planning the event, sophomore Alex Testa commented, "it was nice knowing your classmates were there for you to help you in whatever capacity you needed them." This challenge definitely taught the class how to work together in large-scale event planning. Mission accomplished!

## Mentor Program Presents Students with Opportunities

by Ashley Mushnick, Class of 2007

The SPA Leadership Mentor Program matches sophomore students with professionals in the DC area in order to facilitate exploration of possible career options after graduating college. The relationships developing due to this program are resulting in great opportunities for students in the Leadership Program. Sophomore Ben Murray landed a Legislative Internship at Senator Clinton's office this past semester due to his mentor connection with Brad Cheney, the Assistant to the Chief of Staff. At the office Ben is in charge of drafting the weekly legislative report that summarizes the Senator's sponsorship of bills and collaboration with other NY representatives. "The coolest part of this is getting to meet and interact with the Senator and her staff and learn how the Senate operates while making connections that will provide more opportunities," Ben said.

And Ben's experience with the Mentor Program is not unusual. For example, my mentor, Shin Inouye, a legislative media correspondent at the ACLU, was more than willing to make a call for me during a competitive internship application process at Legal Momentum. Thanks to his help, I now have a paid full-time summer internship with a lobbying organization focusing on women's rights. This program has definitely become an asset to SPA Leadership because it engages students in the professional world through a system of personalized networking.

## Freshman Execute Community Service Projects

By Madeline Joyce, Class of 2008

Freshmen in SPA Leadership kick off their membership in the four-year program with a challenging task. Broken off into five groups with different issue themes, they must execute their own service project by the end of the year by building leadership skills within the dynamic of teamwork. This year, each community service group in the freshmen class brought originality and creativity to the table. Led by Teaching Assistants from the sophomore class, each group successfully completed the following projects.

The education group, headed by TA Anthony Tellish, was the first of the five groups to execute their project. They offered a Career Day for the students of Green Elementary School in the district on Wednesday March 1<sup>st</sup>. They had various speakers including a police officer and yoga instructor volunteer to talk about what their jobs entail.



A doctor speaks to children of Green Elementary School as part of a Career Day organized by SPA Leadership freshmen.

Professor Stiles was also there to speak about her profession as college professor at American University. The goal of the project was to show students in the District of Columbia what career options await them in the future.

TA Paul Perry worked with the immigration group. This group gave aid to immigrants currently studying for citizenship classes. They also hosted a forum on immigration with panelists from the think tank People for the American Way, the organization Friends of Immigration Law Enforcement and the political body the Federation for American Immigration Reform on Monday April 4<sup>th</sup>. The panel debated the contributions of immigrants to American society and how US policy facilitates this contribution.

TA Jen Smyers and her Health issues group volunteered at a Jane Goodall event along with the organization PALS on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup>. They organized a Roots and Shoots booth, an environmental program started by Jane Goodall. Participants planted aloe plants while discussing the health benefits of putting them on cuts and bruises. The group described meeting Jane Goodall as a highlight of the night.

TA Jen Smyers and her Health issues group volunteered at a Jane Goodall event along with the organization PALS on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup>.

The environmental group has been busy tackling a very relevant issue on American University's campus: the litter of student smokers. They have been picking up cigarette butts on the grounds of AU's campus as well as in the DC area. The seven group members and TA Brian Brown also held a forum on the effect of cigarette butt litter on the environment on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

The homelessness group with the aid of TA Heather Botter held an event in the Batelle Atrium Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> showcasing the talent of homeless artists in Washington, DC. In addition to displaying impressive works of art created through the after-breakfast program at Miriam's Kitchen, an organization working against homelessness, DC poets also shared their words with students of AU. The event successfully gave the issue of homelessness a human face.

The freshmen service projects are assigned with the goal of confronting students with the challenges of event planning, networking, teamwork, and creativity. The success of the five groups this year is a great example of how Leadership students learn to step up to the plate and engage in community action.

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I understand now that students get accepted into the Program for a number of different reasons, but I thought at first that they were only looking for one type of student. You know the type, heck you may be the type. The high-school overachiever, the person who got straight A's in 7 AP courses while lettering in soccer, playing the trumpet, winning debate competitions, and serving as Class President alongside the 20 hours a week he or she spent building playgrounds for homeless children.

That was not me. I was average in every way, got pretty good grades, was a mediocre runner on the track team, and was not involved in a leadership position of any sort. How then, would I be able to distinguish myself in an application for a program specializing in leadership? I just took a deep breath, and then took a risk: I wrote my essay about my lack of involvement, and disclosed that I had never been much of a leader. I mailed in the application with the attitude that the worst that could happen was I wouldn't get in. I got in, and later learned that it was essentially due to the strength of my essay.



Marc will be pursuing an MA in Applied Politics next fall at AU.

Whether it was divine providence or merely good fortune, I did not know, but I vowed to take advantage of the opportunity. When I arrived at AU, more good fortune was bestowed upon me: I was placed in the small group led by a TA named Jake Kaskey. Jake immediately took me under his wing and basically mentored me—with an attitude that seemed to say (in as good of an imitation of Jake as I can muster), “Marc, honey—you’re going to do great things—now get them done.” That “gettin’ it done” attitude was transferred fully to me and the other students in the Group Formerly Known as Yellow, and we

became rather well-known for our ambitious ideas.

Freshman year served as a springboard for me in many ways. I gained the confidence to move forward and assert myself in ways I never knew I was capable of. I joined various different political and service clubs. I joined the Leadership Steering Committee. I got involved with Student Government.

I’ve learned many lessons through Leadership. One is that a leader must always be ready to adapt to his or her circumstances. Every situation is just a little bit different from the rest. I remember the First Comedy Night, where the lighting crew didn’t show up—rather than cancel, we lighted the stage (albeit poorly) using Jesse Olczak’s strobe light. Another lesson is that there isn’t much that cannot be done if the endeavor is planned well-enough and everyone is doing their job. Raising \$40,000 to bring Tonic to campus in a fundraiser for the American Heart Association seemed impossible. It happened, and we raised an extra \$5,000 for a worthy cause.

Through Leadership I’ve interned on the hill and learned how to plan a holiday party. I’ve helped put together a stage and written about Sun Tzu. Every little step I’ve taken in the last four years has helped me evolve into the person I am today. No matter what stress I went through, whether it was academic or personal, the Program and the wonderful people in it were there—a rock to lean on, and plenty of shoulders to cry on.

I can’t believe that it’s almost over, but I can say that it has all been worth it. I’ll be staying at AU next year seeking an MA in Political Science, focusing on Applied Politics. I’m not finished learning about leadership—we learn these lessons every day until we die. I just hope to continue to grow, to continue to evolve, to continue to make every friend, family-member, and professor who invested in me proud.

See ya at the alumni reception!

## Former Capitol Hill Press Secretary Speaks to Freshmen

By Amy Teachout, Class of 2008

The freshmen leadership class enjoyed a fine series of guest speakers this semester. One of the highlights of the series came during January, when Kirsten Fedewa, a former House and Senate Press Secretary, spoke to the class, sharing her insight and experiences from a highly charged political career. Fedewa, who is currently heading her own consulting firm is no stranger to the rapid pace and intensity that comes along with a career in public office. She served as the communications Director for the Republican Governors Association for 7 years, as well as the Republican Governor's Liaison for the 1996 and 2000 Presidential campaigns. More locally, she built and bolstered the media arm of the Republican Governors Association as the first-ever Communications Director for the Washington, D.C.-based RGA. Most recently, she secured high profile media venues for Governor Mike Huckabee (AR) during the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York (including Wall Street Journal, Associated Press, Business Week, FOX' Beltway Boys, and others).

Dr. Sarah Stiles reports it was refreshing to hear Fedewa stress the importance of loyalty and teamwork. Stiles says, "this applies to the Leadership Program because as we form relationships in and among the different classes there is a built-in network of talented, loyal people who help their own in the future." Sarah Little noticed the same theme in Fedewa's discussion, stating, "We tend to think of the political arena as ruthless, or 'every man for himself'. It was interesting to hear our speaker describe something very different."

Other students used Fedewa's visit as an opportunity to critique the current political climate. Christina Casey said, "Ms. Fedewa's visit really showed me how ingrained party politics are in our nation's government." Fedewa did discuss the importance of people and flexibility more than just parties. With key contacts in federal, state, and local arenas, as well as national and regional media connections, Fedewa demonstrates the significance of networking. She offered several practical applications for Freshmen leadership students. Katie Myers explains, "Ms. Fedewa gave us a lot of important insight into what employer's look for in a good intern as well as how to work in government. It was so great to hear from someone on the 'inside'."

### Quick Headlines: SPA Leadership Bragging Rights!

**The Cassell Award** was presented to Rachel Weiner, who will also be the SPA commencement speaker. **For the third year in a row, 3 of the AU Truman Scholar Nominees were SPA Leadership Students** this year - Jackie Ingber (finalist), Lacey Rosenbaum (finalist), Janice Smith. **Fulbright Finalist:** Michelle Salomon. **Killam Fellowship Recipient:** Lauren Walls. **The Myra Sadker Equity Student Award** given to Jen Smyers, for her contribution in the production of "Renee the Refugee," a book used as lobbying tool for immigration rights on Capitol Hill. Paul Perry attended the **Harvard Public Policy and Leadership Conference**. Student Ali Yanus was given the **AU Award for Outstanding Scholarship at the Undergraduate Level** and also the **Whitfield Ayres Fellowship for the Study of Liberty and Markets** at UNC-Chapel Hill's Department of Political Science. Paul Perry and Greg Wasserstrom were awarded the **Young People for Fellowship**. Anthony Valdez and Marlon Brown were awarded **Princeton University Public Policy Fellowships**. **Students are also gaining campus leadership positions.** GA member Jen Smyers will serve as **Director of Women's Initiative** of 2005-2006. Ashley Mushnick has been elected as the first female **President of the College Democrats** for 2005-2006. Freshmen Daniel Greeley, Katie Myers, and Charlie Biscotto have all been elected to the **General Assembly**, while Richard Bradbury will continue his service as **Speaker of the GA**. Katie Olson will serve as **President of Circle K**. Julie Fleming is serving as **Treasurer of the service group APO**.

**These are just some of the many awards and positions that SPA Leadership Students have achieved this past semester.**

## Leadership Lessons From Across the Globe

By Amy Quemore, Class of 2006

Dobry den! Greetings from the Czech Republic! Prague has been hailed as one of the most beautiful and cultured cities in the world, and I'd have to agree. Studying here has been a wonderful life changing experience. However, it has not been easy. The Czech Republic became independent in 1993. Previous to that it had endured 40 years of communism and 6 years of Nazi occupation. Clearly, this would leave a stain on the country. Frankly speaking, the people are not friendly and are difficult to deal with. But when you think about what they have been through, it's understandable that they are harsh and standoffish.

Studying here has taught me two primary leadership lessons: tolerance and patience. Having tolerance and understanding was key to us figuring out how to deal with the people here. We had to be tolerant of their behaviors and understand their past in order to find some kind of peace here.

I have learned patience through my friends here. Culture shock is a concept you can study and learn, however, you will never understand it until you actually experience it. Some students here have been struggling with their culture shock since the beginning and some have acclimated. However, we've had to be patient with each other and support one another, otherwise we all would have gone mad months ago. As trying as it has been sometimes, I would not change my experience for the world. Studying in another country where your normal safety nets are removed really teaches you a lot about yourself. Not only do you learn more about you, but also you learn lessons in ways that you never would have back at home. It is truly an experience that I wish everyone could have.

## Words That Inspire

By Stella Roque, Class of 2007

"When eagles are silent the parrots begin to jabber." Although Sir Winston Churchill hails the virtue of silence he was perhaps one the world's most inspiring public speakers. When England was faced with the threat of invasion Churchill's words surged with faith for the British masses an encouragement on a grand scale. The ability to put forward ideas and give them public faith is just as important as setting examples through action.

SPA Leadership's Class of '07 is putting their own words to the test as curriculum year requires each student to exercise public speaking in the classroom - the two main speech themes being conflict resolution and interpretations of readings from John Heider's *The Tao of Leadership*. Subjects that have been spoken on range from the Terry Schiavo case to values such as the quality of self-restraint; each of them posing the class with real life dilemmas and leadership virtues to reflect upon. The exercise is not merely one to pose students with ethical questions on leadership issues to think about, but also to give them a chance to criticize constructively and learn from each other effective modes and techniques of public speaking.

Students are handed out a critique sheet before class to measure up the presenters. They point out what can be done to make the speech better, what were strong and weak points on the subjects were presented, and comment on the composure of the speakers themselves. They pass back the critiques to the presenters for them to analyze their abilities and strengthen their weak points. Student Adam Rosenblatt commented, "it really opens my mind up to see how people from different backgrounds apply their principles and those of the Tao to everyday situations."

Silence is golden, but clear communication and presentation may be worth more among leaders of the past and the future. Among politicians the ability to present a clear coherent issue or argument before an audience is just as important as knowing when to listen. This exercise has enabled students to engage in an academic exploration of leadership, ethics, and communication as second year students in this four year program.

Leadership  
Snapshots



come as your favorite leader party



Steering Committee Retreat



Homelessness Art Show



Leadership TDR Dinners



Holiday Party