



LEADERSHIP VISIONS

Spring 2012

American University School of Public Affairs Leadership Program

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Leadership Students at the White House



By Jesse Schwab
Publications Co-Chair

Each semester Leadership students take on a plethora of competitive and prestigious internships. Students work in both the public and private sectors at locations varying from National Geographic to the Department of Justice. This year, three students and an alumna of the class of 2011 landed coveted internships in the Obama White House. Two of these students have offered insight into the application and interning experience.

Stephen Bronskill (shown in background) is a junior in the Program and is currently studying abroad in Pune, India. He interned in the White House Visitors Office in the Management and Administration Department during the fall semester. He is studying Environmental Studies and Political Science.

How was the process of applying?

I applied online and had a few phone interviews afterwards.

How did Leadership play into the application process or the work you did?

The Leadership Program was instrumental in helping me make this dream a reality by giving me the skills and experiences to apply and supporting me throughout the internship. While it was a challenging semester balanc-

ing classes and other responsibilities while interning full time, Professor Norris's internship class, as well as the amazing Leadership community, were there for me no matter what.

What was the best part of your experience?

Ever since skipping school for the first time in high school to see Barack Obama speak before the Washington State Caucus in 2008, I have dreamed of having a chance to contribute to his administration. It was the honor and privilege of a lifetime to have that dream be fulfilled and see the incredible dedication of public servants inside the White House working towards something bigger than themselves. I loved being part of the work that goes into planning a State Arrival, Garden Tour, and holidays at the White House to make this national treasure something open and accessible to all.

What was the most difficult part of the experience?

Balancing being a full time student and a White House internship was challenging but definitely worth it. I could not have made it through the semester without our Leadership family and am so grateful for all of their support.

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Leadership Students Attend Annapolis Event

By Mitchell Duncombe
Student Director

For the third consecutive year, the SPA Leadership Program was invited to attend the Naval Academy's National Leadership Conference in Annapolis, Maryland. This year, seniors Mitchell Duncombe, Sara Aucker and junior Sara Robinson attended with Program Director Professor Marr for the conference entitled "Visionary Leadership: Navigating through Uncharted Waters." The conference, held January 29th to February 1st, included such notable speakers as General James Mathis, commander of US Central Command, Herman Boone, the real-life coach of the Remember the Titans football team and Howard Putnam, the former CEO of Southwest Airlines.

The speakers shared their experiences in creating bold visions for their organizations as well as important tools for seeing those visions through to success. A tactic emphasized by the speakers was to focus on "the why" of a vision. If a leader can articulate "why" an organization needs to follow their vision, he or she can recruit others to buy into the "how" and "what."

Another lesson emphasized at the conference, just as it is in our Program, was the importance of love in lead-

ership. Both civilian and military leaders shared this view. For example, the closing speaker, Colonel Arthur J. Athens, argued that love was created by sacrifice, and until a leader is willing to sacrifice for his or her team, the team will not sacrifice for their leader.

Aside from listening to the captivating speakers, the Leadership students also spent considerable time with their Academy Midshipmen peers learning about life in the Academy. They ate two meals in the Midshipmen Mess Hall and toured Annapolis, building connections that are sure to last.

Sara Aucker said she was impressed by the honor and dedication of their hosts. "I was truly inspired by the caliber of the people we met there," she said. "They do so much and are so dedicated; it gives me hope for our country's future."

Sara Robinson agreed, and said the trip opened her eyes to military life. She said she was surprised at how similar civilian leadership was to military leadership, and that the trip was one of her favorite SPA Leadership memories.

"I was truly inspired by the caliber of the people we met there. They do so much, and are so dedicated; it gives me hope for our country's future."

-Sara Aucker, Senior

Five Students Apply for National Merit Awards

By Ryan Carter
Publications Co-Chair

Every year in recent history, SPA Leadership students have been nominated to represent American University in the pursuit of national scholarships or honors, including the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, the Udall Scholarship, the Killam Fellowships, the Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship and occasionally the Carnegie Scholarship.

This year American University picked five Leadership students to pursue these prestigious awards.

Stephen Bronskill ('13) and Jose Morales ('13) were nominated for the Truman Scholarship. Katie Hanson ('13) was tapped for the Udall. Josh Halpren ('14) and David Silberman ('13) were chosen to seek the Killam.

Morales also sought and received a Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship to study at Carnegie Mellon University this summer. He looks forward to taking graduate classes in policy and economics as well as taking full advantage of networking opportunities. He credits Leadership Program experiences with guiding him from his sophomore year project to his current internship at the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Halpren's Killam award will allow him to study in Canada. "It isn't really your typical AU Abroad location and a lot of people just think of it as an extension of the U.S. That couldn't be further from the truth ... Canada has a unique social, political and economic culture that Americans can learn a great deal from," said Halpren. The program also allows its members to apply for an \$800 travel grant to travel to other parts of the country.

Halpren, who intends to teach secondary social studies after graduation, said that he is "very interested in education policy, specifically policy relating to teachers, the teaching profession and restoring dignity to a profession that is suffering from extremely high turnover rates."

"I believe that the projects I have done over my two years in the Leadership Program helped my application, especially my freshman project with the Gay-Straight Alliance at Woodrow Wilson High School. ... Being around such amazingly talented people all of the time definitely pushed me to seek out opportunities such as Killam."

"When it comes to things like education policy and especially Teach For America, ... the Program has allowed me to voice these concerns and opinions in a way that has helped me to learn about other sides of the issue while also solidifying my own viewpoints and passions."

Hanson is seeking the Udall which would award her \$5,000 toward her education and sponsor a week-long meeting in Arizona to meet the other scholars and learn about

environmental issues and tribal policy.

Hanson found that applying for the award was an opportunity to plan out her future. "The scholarship also required that I reflect on my past experience in Leadership and independent service projects, as well as discuss why I wanted to pursue a career in the environmental field," said Hanson.

"I talked a great deal about my Leadership projects and experiences in the Leadership Program. I would not have the service or leadership experience without the Leadership Program. It was instrumental to me being nominated and eventually applying for the scholarship," said Hanson.

Last year, Bronskill and Jennifer Jones ('12) won Udall Scholarships and were two of 80 Udall Scholars selected from a national pool of 510 candidates from 231 colleges and universities, according to an Office of Merit Awards newsletter. In addition to the scholarship, they now have an extensive network with other Udall scholars.

"From the application process, I learned what I want to do for the rest of my life. After creating a goal and plan of how to get there, I realized what jobs fit my personality and goals best," said Jones.

In addition to the Udall, Jones earned the opportunity for the National Science Foundation's Research Experience for Undergraduates at University of Colorado's Mountain Research Station for summer 2011. She lived at the research station in the Rocky Mountains and researched the mountain pine beetle and soil nitrogen content with the guidance of a professor advisor, which encouraged her future plans to study nutrient cycling and ecosystem health.

"I learned the importance of leadership in a scientific setting. I worked days in the field on the alpine tundra. There is a lot of teamwork involved when working long days in a small group." Jones said that climbing mountains may have been fun, but it also taught her something about her own limits. "When there is someone helping you up the side of the mountain, it's a lot easier."

Nate Bronstein ('12) and Carol Foster ('12) were Truman Scholarship 2011

Finalists. Foster was connected to a network that helped her secure a recent internship. "[It] helped me decide after all not to go to law school and focused me in on my environmental and transportation policy interests," said Foster.

"The Truman requires reflection on leadership experiences. ... Without SPA Leadership, I would have never even heard of or had been inspired to apply for the Truman," said Foster.



Laser Tag Adventures Have Leadership Lessons

By Amanda Casoni
Staff Writer

Leadership students united after a tiring week of classes, work and other activities for a nice relaxing (well...actually quite intense) evening of laser tag on Friday, February 3. Students came together for Leadership bonding and to simply have a good time.

After a Friday rush hour coach bus ride from DC to Virginia, the laser tag battles began. Working in three different teams, red, blue and green, Leadership students teamed up to tag their enemies and avoid being hit. As simple as this may sound, these competitions required trust, teamwork and leadership in order to be successful and win.

Aside from the thrill of the fierce competition, the event provided an excellent opportunity for students to de-stress—something that is important for every leader to remember. The game allowed students to be kids once more and to have fun without taking themselves too seriously—something that adults seem to lose sight of. Another positive component of the trip was interclass student bonding and networking, as several students met

new friends in older or younger Leadership classes.

The event, like many other Leadership programmed events, created great memories that are sure to last. No one will soon forget the intense air hockey match between Professor Marr and Student Director Mitchell Duncombe.

The final laser battle was also particularly memorable. Teams were formed by the animal-type personality assessment groupings, which pitted owls, lions, peacocks and koalas against each other. The koalas, known for their strong listening and harmonizing skills, claimed victory. The lions and owls suggested that overconfidence in their team ultimately led to their defeat.

Although there initially was laughter about the leadership lessons to be learned from laser tag, after the games began, it was clear that everyone demonstrated leadership qualities as they played each match. Leaders delegated, ordered, suggested, and cooperated effectively within their teams to accomplish success.

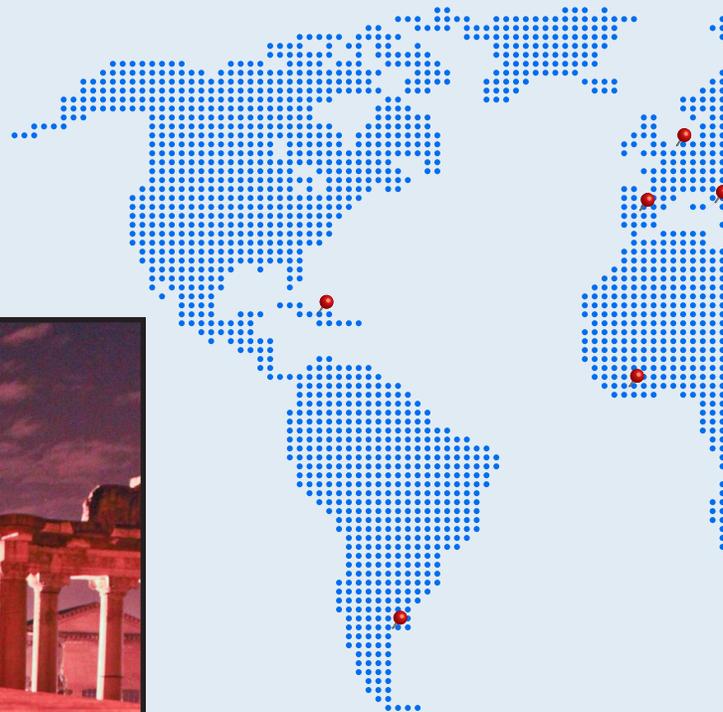


Above, Stephanie Eichmann (12) in South Africa. "Studying abroad in South Africa was an incredible experience. The blend of European influences with traditional African traditions gave the city a unique flavor. One of the most memorable moments of the semester was a ten day camping safari through Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. I met amazing people, saw unbelievable sights, and even got to pet a lion!"

Right, Rbia Bakshi (12) in Rome, Italy.



Leadership Around the World



“Liners” Unite Program to Peer Network

By Elyse Preston
Staff Writer



Leadership dinners or “Liners,” as students in the Program affectionately call them, are a great way to bring the community together and foster interclass bonds across the four years of Leadership students. Liners provide an opportunity for students to share experiences and learn from one another.

The spring semester provided two successful Liners. At the first, titled “Sundaes and Study Abroad,” upperclassmen shared stories and advice from their study abroad adventures to amazing locations including: Cuba, Turkey, China, Italy, Spain, Argentina, and Belgium.

The upperclassmen discussed their own unique experiences and takeaways. Some had only exhilarating stories to share, while others faced struggles and challenges during the study abroad process. Each of their perspectives served to paint a clearer picture of what it means to study abroad.

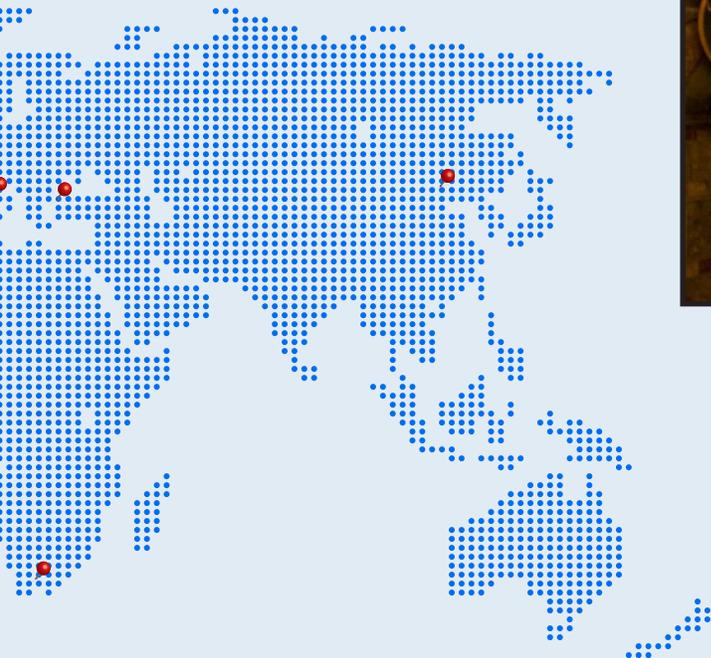
For interested underclassmen, valuable tips included important questions to ask the AU Abroad office before deciding to study in a specific location, and making sure that the institution you will be taking courses through offers the classes you need and in a language you can

understand. In addition to being informative, this event was also fun. Students were invited to make their own ice cream sundaes and build relationships with other students in the Program.

The second Linner of the semester, “Chinese Food and Career Choices” offered students an opportunity for younger students to learn from older ones about finding, selecting, and enjoying the great internships Washington DC offers. An added bonus was the delicious Chinese food. Students learned that while American University’s location in DC provides a wealth of internship possibilities, it takes hard work and motivation to stand out and get your dream internship. The experience in the Leadership Program gives students these skills and helps them secure great internships.

Internships help as much to rule out career paths as to find them. So, older students shared their experiences in their great internship positions as well as their not so great internship positions. These students also gave advice about juggling school, internships, and life. This sage advice is sure to assist the Program’s younger students in gaining valuable skills and knowledge from each of their many internships in our nation’s capital.

ound The World



Left, Jesse Schwab ('12) in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey.

Right, Sami Green ('12) in Inner Mongolia.



Seniors Reconnect Before Final Semester

By Ryan Carter
Publications Co-Chair

To kick off their final semester together as a class, seniors traveled to Camp Highroad in Middleburg, Virginia. The final retreat serves as a special time to reconnect after a year or more of being separated by study abroad, internships, or simply the demands of DC life. Much of the weekend's success depends on retreating from the distractions of university life in the city and entering a world apart that allows students to focus on one another.

The weekend started off with (mostly) non-competitive bowling in Bethesda. "I liked bowling and I'd like to get together like that again next year if we're in DC, so my team can get payback for losing this time," said Phil Cardarella ('12).

Third year senior Kent Hiebel, who is graduating a year early, said that the retreat helped him build relationships with students he had not experienced class with. "The senior retreat was a great experience to connect with the class above me.... There were a lot [of people] that I did know from activities, but there were many that I didn't... so I did have the chance to get to know them."

Then, the class returned to the site of their sophomore retreat, seeking respite from DC and time to regroup. The class bonded over games and took time to reflect on the Program's work in their own lives and how their hands melded the Program in the last four years.

The close relationships built between the seniors are the summation

of years of shared experiences, big and small. So, both planned and unplanned events, whether big or small, contributed to the retreat's success.

"I liked the car ride down.... I really enjoyed getting to catch up with people along the way.... My favorite part was just sitting around and hearing what everyone did. I had no idea what amazing stuff everyone was getting into.... It was a room with amazing success after amazing success. It's what you would expect from a giant room of ... people like ourselves," said Colin Everett.

As the first class to have Program Director Professor Marr for each of their four years, the class of 2012 has particular insight into how their participation transformed the curriculum and Program activities.

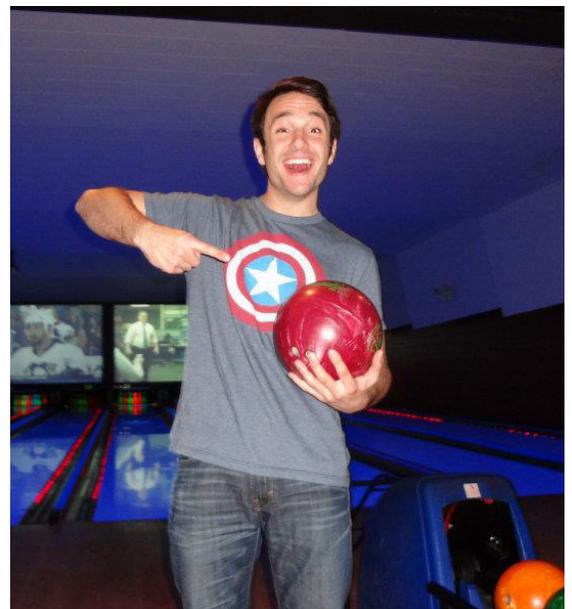
"This Program has grown leaps and bounds from our freshman year—from advancements in the curriculum, to more and better events,

to increased recognition and involvement of our students on campus, to a stronger sense of community—and it's been wonderful for our class to be part of its evolution," said Mitchell Duncombe ('12, Program Student Director).

"I think I speak for all of us when I say that I can't wait to see all the great things the people of this Program accomplish."

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Deon Jones ('14) with President Clinton during his visit.

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Leadership Program Co-Sponsors President Clinton's AU Visit

By Sam McBee
Staff Writer

Hundreds of students packed into Bender Arena to listen to former President Bill Clinton give a speech about the need to embrace our common humanity as science and technology catapults mankind in to a new era. The January 27th event, which was put on by the Kennedy Political Union, was co-sponsored by the Leadership Program.

The president arrived at AU without a prepared speech and instead relied on his knowledge, experience, and charismatic style to entertain the audience and stress his humanist vision. He touched on subjects ranging from string theory and particle physics to economics and politics, and strongly advocated for taking advantage of the advances in science and technology to help create social systems throughout the world that would spur economic and social

development.

Then, he stressed the importance of leadership. As part of his Clinton Global Initiative, Clinton is helping people around the world by setting up networks and systems, which empower others to lead. He emphasized the importance of fostering local leadership to make long-lasting developments in societies. His final remarks encouraged cross-cultural relationships in spite of differences.

"Empathy," he said, "is nothing more than imagining how the world is received by someone who is not you."

Clinton was awarded the first annual "Wonk of the Year" award by American University for his service, and he concluded by challenging AU students to: "Tap your inner-wonk."

Leadership at the White House (continued from page 1)

Katie Hanson, a junior in the Program, is currently interning for the Council for Environmental Quality, in the Office of the Environmental Executive at the White House. She is an Environmental Studies and Environmental Policy major. We interviewed her about the application process.

How did you first hear about the internship?

I actually heard about the internship through being on the Eco-Sense planners listserv. Being part of the club and really involved keeps you updated on internships, conferences, and other opportunities. I would never have even dreamed of applying for a White House internship unless it had appeared in my e-mail inbox.

How was the process of applying?

The application was fairly simple, but still different and more involved than most internship applications, because it had a form for you to fill out that asked you your favorite song, to describe yourself in 3 sentences no more than 8 words each (which was a challenge) and other things, in addition to a resume and an essay. It was great, because I was able to write freely in an essay about my qualifications and interests, instead of a very restrictive cover letter. I felt I could present myself the best I could with this application.

How did Leadership play into the process?

Leadership has definitely played a huge role in every internship I have ever applied for and worked at. I always use my social action projects from both my freshmen and sophomore year to demonstrate my leadership skills in interviews, and many of the things we have learned, especially about working with others and in groups, have been very useful. Plus, I really appreciated how supportive the Program has been, because without the opportunities I've had in the Program, I would not have applied for this or be where I am today.

Having an example of Stephen already in the White House made me feel more encouraged and comfortable applying and accepting the internship. Professor Marr even told Associate Dean Weekes about me getting this internship, and getting a personalized congratulations email was so surprising and exciting. Leadership is essential for an internship, because you have to be confident enough to tackle tasks that you may be unfamiliar with, and you have to work with people everyday, all day, which the freshmen year class really helped with. Leadership gave me the confidence and experience needed to do the best work at an internship, especially when you are working under the leader of the country.