

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
**LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAM**

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

# VISIONS

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## LEADERSHIP PROJECTS MAKE A BIG IMPACT

by Maggie Brennan '16

As the academic year wrapped up, Leadership students were out in force to enact projects on social issues and forge a community working towards greater change. As part of the annual curriculum in the first two years of the Program, students work to address significant problems and propose new solutions.

In the freshman year, Leadership students work in teams of seven which are focused on different interest areas – called “Issue Groups” – to identify, research, and develop a means to remediate a significant social problem. This year, the Human Rights and Equality Issue Group organized an awareness event on sex trafficking, with a showing of an award-winning documentary and a panel of speakers. The Urban Development Issue Group mediated a three-part series called “Know the Name” at D.C.’s Eastern Market to address and assuage the stigma attached to homelessness.

The Gender and Sexuality Issue Group hosted an event “Sex=Pizza” with renowned TED talk speaker Al Vernacchio during April, sexual assault prevention month. Environmental Sustainability led a Boys and Girls Club in renovating a riparian area along the Anacostia River. All of the student groups, from Law & Society, to Education exemplified the initiative and drive of the Leadership community to create genuine social change.

“I never could have imagined the strangers I was assigned to work with could have turned into some of my best friends,” Bob Siegel ('17) said of the connections he made in his group. “It’s been incredible growing with them, watching our project come to life, and creating memories that have made the Program, and freshman year as a whole, a worthwhile experience.”

The sophomore year of the Program allows



Sophomore Lucas Wright (center right) smiles with the speakers from his Whistleblowing Panel.



TED talk's Al Vernacchio delivers his renowned perspective at the Gender and Sexuality group's event.



Sophomore Emily Andre shares her students' visions for more beautiful greenspaces!

students to pursue their individual causes for their annual social action project. This year the diversity of interests and backgrounds within the Leadership community was particularly prominent, with students tackling sexual assault in Greek organizations, Leadership training for high school students, Tibetan water pollution and everything in between.

Sophomore Lucas Wright organized a panel of renowned authorities on government whistleblowers, including Jesselyn Radack, Edward Snowden's personal attorney. Emily Andre taught a class to first through third graders about beautifying green spaces, and Michelle Le brought puppies to American University's campus to encourage healthier and happier living, an event that drew over 1,100 participants.

Leilani Harris initiated a discussion in support of the children of incarcerated parents, and Grace Hamilton organized “A Day without Disney” to draw attention to the bullying undertones of some of the TV channel's most popular shows. The sophomore class as a whole has come to represent the colorful mosaic of passions, backgrounds, and strengths present in the entire Leadership community.

The initiative shown by the members of the freshman and sophomore classes has made the Leadership Program more active and increasingly present on American University's campus. The students of the Program have become the recognizable voices for change in their own community and on a broader scale, taking the attitude of the well-informed student that is typical on campus one step further into substantive action. From homelessness to whistleblowing to bullying, SPA Leadership students are heeding the call and going out into the world to make change every day.

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“It is easy to sit up and take notice, what is difficult is **standing up** and **taking action.**”

*Honore de Balzac*



**Sophomore Michelle Le (pictured) brought dogs and healthy living awareness to campus for her sophomore action project!**



**Alumni Co-Coordinator Anthony Torres and fellow sophomore Alli Heller get ready for some networking and fun at the spring Alumni Reception!**

# SENIOR SHOWCASE

Included among the 26 SPA Leadership Program students who this year earn their certificate in Advanced Leadership Studies are:

- A Harry S. Truman Scholarship recipient (Deon Jones) and nominee (Josh Halpren)
- A Public Policy and International Affairs Fellow (Deon Jones)
- A Killam Scholarship recipient to study abroad in Canada (Josh Halpren)
- A Udall Scholarship Nominee (Lauren Reiser), and
- Recipients of two of the ten student achievement awards conferred at commencement (Allie Cannington and Joe Wisniewski); Ki'tay Davidson, who graduated in December, will earn a third award

Almost two-thirds, 65% (17) will graduate with Latin honors, at least three *summa cum laude*. Combined, they have made 117 appearances on the Dean's list in their first seven semesters. More than a third of the class (9) has appeared on the Dean's list every semester. Six members have been offered induction into the preeminent liberal arts honor society, Phi Beta Kappa. A quarter of the class (7) will graduate with not one but two bachelors degrees.

Combined, these 26 students have earned 22 merit awards. A quarter of our graduates are Presidential Scholars. One student studied at the London School of Economics her entire junior year. Another has had a paper accepted for a conference at Westminster University in London. They have participated in the SPA Undergraduate Research Symposium seven times and won two awards.

Together, they have completed 109 internships, for an average of 4.2 internships per student. Two students interned in the White House for Vice President Biden. Others interned at the ACLU, The Federal Reserve Board, the EPA, the Brookings Institution, the Congressional Research Service, the Departments of Education and Treasury, and the Organization of American States, among many other places. One student completed 11 internships while an undergraduate.

The class has occupied more than 86 leadership roles on campus including the President of the Black Students Association, three presidents of fraternities and sororities, two Residence Assistants, a Program Assistant, several AU Ambassadors, an orientation leader, and the Speaker of the Student Government Senate.

Together, they estimate having devoted over 8500 hours (8,695) in service to their community, over 330 hours of service per student on average. An extraordinary collection of servant leaders is the SPA Leadership Class of 2014!

109

**Number of internships held by  
the class of 2014**

117

**Class of 2014 appearances on  
the Dean's List**

8,695

**Hours of community service  
given by the class of 2014**

# THE LEADERSHIP FAMILY

## *Diverse Abilities Come Together at the Talent Show!*

by Sam Garrison '17

The wide variety of the strengths and talents of Leadership Program students were on inspiring display at this year's talent show February 2nd.

To start the show, Aileen Evans ('17) and Ariane Schaffer ('17) showed their memorization skills by reciting fifty of the numbers of Pi. Starting off strong, the team offered great support to each other as they pressed through to an impressive finish.

The first-year teaching team gave yet another great example of teamwork by performing a choreographed dance to a medley of hit pop songs. Alex

Events Committee, was "particularly touched by the performance." He remarked that "[f]or [him] it summed up the fact that here in the program we



**The Teaching Team for the first-year class getting ready for their mash up dance performance!**



**All of the amazing students who participated in the Talent Show!**

Bradley ('16) also gave an impressive demonstration of his karate skills with the help of sophomore Teaching Assistant Lucas Wright.

Wes Young ('17) and Student Director Holly Hagerty ('14) gave a heartwarming performance of "Alone in the Universe" which is a song from "Seussical the Musical". Paul Wells ('16), one of the hosts of the Talent Show as co-coordinator of the

are more than friends and leaders--we are a family. We never have to feel as though we are alone in the universe because we have the entire program and Professor Marr there always supporting and encouraging us."

Paul himself performed with his visiting mother a beautiful ballad a capella. In her debut performance, Elise Francis ('17) sang a beautiful rendition of "Put Your Records On" by Corinne Bailey Rae, and David Shadburn ('15) gave an impressive guitar cover of a Bob Dylan song.

To top it all off, all the students took center stage and showed that they were more than capable of doing the "Cha-Cha Slide." All in all, the winter afternoon was filled with laughs, smiles, and great appreciation for the fact that the Leadership Program is filled with such gifted people.

# THE LEADERSHIP FAMILY

## *Networking and Reunion at the Alumni Reception*

by Robert Siegel '17

The Leadership Program's annual alumni reception came this year on March 21. Held again downtown at Finemondo Italian Country Kitchen, the reception welcomed graduates and current members of the Program. The night afforded the opportunity for alumni to catch up with each other and for younger students to meet and network with them.

The event was an unprecedented success, with over 95 people in attendance. The alumni community was out in force; with representatives ranging from the most recent graduating class all the way back to 1995. "It was such a great chance to connect with so many Leadership alumni about their experiences in the program and the amazing opportunities they've had" said Sharon Lee ('17). "I really appreciated that so many alumni took the time out of their busy schedules to attend."

Alumni of the program also had advice on how to make the most out of leadership opportunities coming up for the current students. "Talking to alumni was a great way to learn about leadership positions within the program," said Brynn Ehni, also class of 2017. "I talked to Tom McNutt ('12), a former teaching assistant for the Program who was very personable and full of useful advice."

The event was a success due to extensive planning and preparation by the Alumni Relations committee. Brynn Ehni modestly stated, "We made a lot of phone calls, but it was the committee coordinators, Anthony Torres and Monica Murthy, who did most of the work and put so much into the preparation for the event." The night ended with a silent auction prepared by the Fundraising committee, with items ranging from an iPad to a beautiful framed picture and included Leadership memorabilia like Professor's Marr's leather jacket. The auction raised \$750 for the program.

The annual reception is a great chance for new students to learn more about the Program, its older members, and how to network, while also giving Program alumni the chance to see old friends and enjoy the memories and friendships made through the Program.



**The Alumni Committee that put together the whole event!**



**Students and Professor Susanna Washburn grab a bite to eat with Alumni.**



**The Fundraising Committee was out in force to coordinate the Program's first silent auction!**

# IN THE COMMUNITY

## *Juniors Learning on the Job*

by Lori Interlicchio '15

In the junior year of the program, Leadership students participate in an internship and class that analyzes the operations and dynamics of the workplace. In the curriculum of the internship class, Leadership students learn about organizational behavior and leadership in the workplace. While completing their internships, they learn what makes an office function correctly. The students are taught to evaluate the entire culture of their organization and consider what could be done better. The skills learned in this class help students to analyze their work environment, provide practical knowledge to improve productivity, and better manage professional relationships.

Each incoming junior class is under the formative care of Professor Susannah Washburn throughout their experience in the internship

class. As a former political appointee for two administrations, Professor Washburn brings extensive experience to the classroom. Her connections provide new opportunities for the students to consider as they are exposed to guest speakers from various professions. Professor Washburn gives each individual meaningful feedback in their internship experiences and empowers the students to play an active role in each class and learn from one another.

“The best part of the internship class is exploring what types of work environments mesh with your motivational needs and leadership style. This is a useful skill to have when looking for jobs. It really helps you to figure out what types of employment are a good fit for you.” Cj Murphy, ('15).

### *How does the Program work again?*

#### **Freshman Year**

Students are divided up by their interests into issue groups, which meet weekly with a teaching assistant to put together a year-long project. The curriculum centers around leaders, leadership theory and practice, including learning to manage group dynamics.

#### **Sophomore Year**

This year the students take on their own individual passions for their year long social action project. With a support group of teaching assistants and Leadership resources, the year hinges on encouraging initiative and cultivating autonomous organizational skills.

#### **Junior Year**

This programmed semester is about learning the intricacies of the modern workplace by providing real life experience. Students take an internship and complementary class that guides them through organizational leadership.

#### **Senior Year**

In the final semester of the program, as a capstone, each student creates a conference-like presentation on an issue of leadership theory and practice of interest to them under the umbrella theme chosen by the class. This year the seniors chose uncommon and unexpected leadership.

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Sage Advice at the Internships Linner*

by Justin Etheridge '17

American University students are known for pursuing internships throughout the nation's capital, and SPA Leadership students are known as some of the best interns you can get. This was certainly apparent at the year's final Leadership Dinner, affectionately known as Linner, on March 25 themed around internships.

New and old Leadership students alike assembled to eat pizza, enjoy each other's company, and share stories, advice, and wisdom about applying for and holding internships while in college.

The evening was full of entertaining and informative anecdotes. Older leadership students discussed their experiences as interns and gave advice about how to overcome the challenges associated with interning while in college.

Second year Leadership student and Teaching Assistant Joelle Appenrodt remarked to all those in attendance that, "internships are a lot about what you put into them." Discussion themes included the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, working hard, and networking

with your co-workers and supervisors. Several speakers reminded those in attendance that you will most likely be remembered not by what you did but by how hard you worked and how you treated others.

Some students laughed about a mistake they had made and turned those mistakes into teachable moments for others. First year student Lindsey Halvorson was comforted by this honesty, remarking that, "it was reassuring to hear that

messing something up is normal and happens to the best of us! It does not define the rest of your career or the rest of your experience as an intern."

The event also served to show how strong the network of support and opportunity provided by the Leadership Program can be. Many students shared stories about how they had found internships through connections they made within Leadership. Many students found they secured internships at prestigious institutions, such as the Department of Justice and ML Strategies, because of the positive precedents set by Leadership students who came before them.



**A group of leaders from all grades engages each other.**



**Freshmen are all smiles over some delicious food!**



**Student Director David Shirbroun shares his past experiences with the group.**

# LEADERSHIP IN PHOTOS

The **Leadership Program** encourages students to be **active members** in their communities. The photos below are **snapshots** of the action **Leadership students** are engaged in every day. **SPALeaders** from all grades **challenge** themselves and their peers to be **socially active citizens**.



Fundraising Committee hard at work before the Alumni Reception!



The Urban Development Issue Group facilitates discussion of homelessness at DC's Eastern Market



The Human Rights and Equality Issue Group put on an event discussing sex trafficking



New Student Directors Rahi Patel and Joelle Appenrodt smile at the Gender and Sexuality Issue Group event!



Students from all years gathered for the annual Leadership tour of the Cherry Blossoms Festival!