Message from the Director

What a spring semester! The semester began on a cold January day with mock interviews, continued with a warm and sunny trip to Washington, DC, and concluded on a rainy weekend with our first-ever WLI Reunion. All three of these activities remind me of the critical role that our WLI supporters play in the success of the WLI. Members of Penn State’s Career Services staff donated their time to conduct the mock interviews, which our students consistently tell us are one of the most valuable experiences during their time in WLI. During our Washington, DC, trip we met with several dozen WLI alumni, mentors, and other supporters, who generously opened their offices to us and candidly shared their experiences and expertise. And then, our WLI Reunion provided the perfect conclusion to the semester. Many WLI alumni returned for the occasion and enjoyed our Celebration Luncheon, a “Red Carpet” dinner, and a Sunday morning hike of Mt. Nittany.

The semester was a celebration of the WLI network, which grows bigger and stronger by the year. Thanks to all of you for being part of it, and congratulations to the WLI class of 2009-10, most of whom graduated in May and who will make us all proud as they begin the next chapter in their lives.

Sincerely,

Dr. Abigail Diehl
WLI Reunion 2011

(L-R): Members of the WLI class of 2008-09: Rachael Ference, Caitlin O’Neill, Chelsie White, and Michelle Kirsch

(R-L): Members of the WLI class of 2008-09: Rachael Ference, Chelsie White, Michelle Kirsch, and Caulin O’Neill

(L-R): Caitlin O’Neill, WLI 2008-09; and April Judy, WLI 2006-07

At the top of Mt. Nittany!

Renee Brooks, WLI 2004-05
Careen Yarnal, WLI faculty mentor; and Brent Yarnal
Rachael Ference, WLI 2008-09; and Marissa (White) Malcolm, WLI 2004-05
Nicole Shelton, WLI 2010-11; and her mentor, Joy (Ford) Dieffenderfer, WLI 2003-04

(WLI Nursing alumni and faculty: Lauren Thumm, WLI 2006-07; Sara Ross 2007-08; Beth Bates, Nursing alumna and Internal Advisory Committee member; Michelle Kirsch, WLI 2008-09; Nikki Hill, WLI 2005-06; and Paula Milone-Nuzzo, dean, School of Nursing)

WLI alumni at the conclusion of the “Red Carpet” Dinner

Members of the WLI 2010-11 class perform a skit during the Celebration Luncheon

(L-R): Joy (Ford) Dieffenderfer, WLI 2003-04; Doris Golebiewski, WLI 2003-04; Nan Crouter, dean of the College of Health and Human Development; and Hye-Won Lee, WLI 2003-04
Alumni explain how WLI made them stars

In preparation for the star-themed WLI Reunion in April, we asked WLI alumni to explain “how WLI helped make you a star.” Below are some of the responses we received:

I use the skills I gained from WLI almost every day while I train groups of people. The importance of networking and giving back to the community has also impacted my life.

– Susan Algeo, WLI 2004-05

WLI has made me a star because it has really raised my self-esteem and helped me realize there are so many things I can accomplish.

– Joy (Ford) Dieffenderfer, WLI 2003-04

WLI helped me to further develop some of the most important networking and leadership skills that I use in my personal and professional life.

– Jenny Jackson, WLI 2003-04

My involvement with this group of compassionate, motivated, and intelligent women has helped me to recognize those qualities in myself and has given me role models for the kind of woman I would like to become.

– Michelle Kirsch, WLI 2008-09

WLI gave me the confidence to pursue my career goals by cultivating leadership and team-building skills—so crucial in my day-to-day activities.

– Marissa (White) Malcolm, WLI 2004-05

The Women’s Leadership Initiative gave me the insight on how to develop my leadership skills, while also teaching me the importance of balancing my personal life with my work life.

– Sara Ross, WLI 2007-08
WLI Honors Five-Year Mentors

At the Celebration Luncheon on Saturday, April 9, four women leaders were honored for five years of service as Women’s Leadership Initiative mentors. Those honored were: Beth Bates, Sherry DelGrosso, Monica Manning, and KerriLaine (Clark) Prunella. Past mentees of the honored mentors were asked to submit a few words about what their mentorship meant to them. Below are several excerpts of mentees’ responses:

**Beth Bates**

My experience in WLI would not have been the same without my mentor, Beth Bates. She is an incredible woman who I have been lucky to have as a professor, role model, and mentor. Any WLI student would be lucky to have Beth as their mentor, and I am so thankful that she is mine. Congratulations on being a five-year mentor, Beth! Here’s to the next five!
– Michelle Pitt, WLI 2009-10

Mrs. Bates has been a superb role-model in showing me that an RN can take on many roles, both within nursing and personally throughout her lifespan. I hope to emulate Mrs. Bates’s spirit to be a positive ambassador of the Penn State University community and to serve all individuals in need whether in the U.S. or abroad.
– Carolyn Higgins, WLI 2010-11

Beth is what I call a “TP”...total package. She is kind, generous, smart, and successful in both her personal and professional life. After five years of knowing Beth, we still call and get together any opportunity we can since I have graduated. Beth is not only a mentor, she has now become a trusted friend.
– Lauren Thumm, WLI 2006-07

**Sherry DelGrosso**

Sherry...is truly wise, brings passion and dedication to everything she does, is an amazing source of support for her friends and family, and can get more accomplished in two hours than I can in two days.... Sherry agreed to be my mentor formally, but she has also continued to be a role model, friend, and inspiration to me since. I am forever grateful for her mentorship and friendship.
– Nikki Hill, WLI 2004-05

The first time I met Sherry, I felt instantly welcomed....Nothing I do will ever be enough to repay her for all that she has done for me. People enter your life for a reason. I am so blessed and grateful every single day to know Sherry as a mentor and a cherished friend. She is truly family to me and I would not be the person I am today without her constant guidance....Because of her, I am motivated to become a mentor myself someday. Words don’t even begin to describe how thankful I am to have her in my life.
– Alyssa Todaro, WLI 2009-10

Sherry has not only been my mentor this semester, but she has also been my friend....As a mentor Sherry opens up her arms and life to her mentees....I am thankful and I cherish the relationship that Sherry and I have. I know that Sherry will continue to be my mentor and friend even long after WLI.
– Ashley Sammaritano, WLI 2010-11

**Monica Manning**

Monica was a constant support and mentor during and after my time with WLI....Most importantly, Monica is a kind-hearted and caring individual. I am lucky to have gotten the chance to know her, professionally and personally.
– Bridgid Zeirblis, WLI 2007-08

As a mentor and a friend, Monica surpassed any expectations and hopes that I had about having a mentor. She has been there when I needed advice, has allowed me to shadow her as the Speech Language Pathologist in the State College school system, and has often invited me to have lunch to talk.
– Jennifer Moore, WLI 2010-11

To me, a mentor is warm, caring, giving, compassionate, and a great person to bounce ideas off of. Monica is all of these things and more! It is evident that she truly has a passion for helping others. I would now consider Monica not just a mentor, but also a friend.
– Kim Fleishman, WLI 2009-10

**KerriLaine (Clark) Prunella**

Kerri can be defined in many ways: a diligent worker, a strong leader, a caring person. But in my eyes, Kerri’s ability to be a friend and mentor to me is what shines the most. Kerri constantly dedicates her time to helping other people find and lead them to their passion.”
– Melissa Navarro, WLI 2010-11

Kerri’s easygoing demeanor made it comfortable to approach her the moment I learned she was my mentor. Her perseverance and commitment to her career and education have always been something that I admire and strive to emulate. Kerri also continues to give back to our alma mater, and definitely showcases what Penn State pride is all about!
– Cara Bell, WLI 2007-08

Kerri’s fun and friendly demeanor reassured me that I was a very lucky student in WLI to have her as my mentor....I looked to her for advice or her professional expertise many times, but she was always willing to simply “just be there” for me....Kerri has been a great contribution to the WLI program, and she is the epitome of what a mentor for young professional women should be.
– Katie Ritter, WLI 2009-10
Annual Field Trip to Washington, DC Inspires Students

On March 18 and 19, the Women’s Leadership Initiative descended upon Washington, DC, for its annual “field trip.” The first stop was the “Castle” building at the Smithsonian Institution, where the group met with Dr. Eva Pell, under secretary for science at the Smithsonian and former vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School at Penn State. Dr. Pell discussed her career path and shared candid advice with the students, such as the importance of finding a mentor and, when it’s acceptable, of taking risks. She also shared tips about applying to graduate school. “Eva helped me to realize that I should take advantage of the relationships I have with my professors,” one student wrote. “[She] showed that hard work and passion are a powerful combination,” wrote another.

The group then walked up the mall to Humphrey Building, home to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). There, the students met with Dr. Wanda Jones, principal deputy assistant secretary for health in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH). Dr. Jones, a Penn State alumna, discussed her career in public health and the many programs that HHS oversees. The students described her as “passionate,” “fearless,” and “a pioneer.” “Wanda is an amazing person who has done a lot with her life and, through her work, has affected many people,” wrote one student.

On Friday evening, the group was treated to a networking reception with local WLI alumni, mentors, and members of the Penn State Professional Women’s Network of Metro Washington. “The women at the networking reception were so interested in what we had to say and so willing to help us,” remarked one student. “I was worried about doing everything ‘right’…but everyone was so nice and welcoming that it felt natural to interact with everyone and ask them questions.”

Saturday kicked off with a panel discussion on the topic of ethical leadership with Annina Burns ’03 NUTR, a public health policy analyst at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; LaToya Smith ’02 KINES, a podiatric physician in Annapolis; and Jo
Ann Webb ’70 NURS, the senior director of federal relations and policy at the American Organization of Nurse Executives. The panelists shared their ethical philosophies with the students, as well as how those philosophies translate into behaviors in the workplace. Webb encouraged the students to treat everyone with respect and to be willing to negotiate, because what is important to one person may not be important to another person. Smith encouraged the students to choose a profession for the right reasons. “I got into my profession because I had a desire to serve….I do what I do because I enjoy what I’m doing,” she said. Selecting a profession in this way can help someone avoid poor decisions that may be motivated by other things.

Politics in the workplace was the topic of a lunchtime presentation by Mary Good ’85 IFS, senior vice president and director of human resources at SRA International. Good showed the students how to conduct a “political analysis” of their workplace, the importance of learning about an organization’s culture, and how to navigate politics in the “real world.”

The day concluded with a panel discussion on “Men’s Perspectives on Leadership.” The panelists were Tom Albright, unit chief of the FBI’s Crisis Management Unit; Jeff Mike, director of recruiting and principal HR liaison at the American Institutes for Research; and Scott Miles, president of operations at Miles LeHane Companies Inc. The panelists were asked if there are particular leadership characteristics that differ between men and women, and whether there are particular qualities that are associated with women leaders. The panelists felt that the differences between men’s and women’s leadership characteristics are not as great as their commonalities, and Albright advised students to “lead first rather than focusing on what group you fit into.” Miles felt that women are more collaborative in the decision-making process and that this is beneficial in the workplace.

The field trip was both informative and inspirational. At the end of the weekend, one student wrote in her reflection journal, “I will never forget everything we have been taught…I am so excited to see how my career plays out and the ways WLI has made my future brighter.”

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**New WLI Class Selected**

The WLI internal advisory committee selected twenty-three students for the 2011-2012 class of WLI. They are:

**Biobehavioral Health**
Joanna Urban

**Communication Sciences and Disorders**
Alex Koller

**Human Development and Family Studies**
Lauren Lissenden

**Health Policy and Administration**
Kristen Smith
Julie Vardaro
Suzanne Venezia

**Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Management**
Kristina Foldes
Megan Taylor
Chelsea Wechter

**Kinesiology**
Meghan Brennan
Elizabeth Catlin
Amy Kalajainen
Carina Osborn
Stephanie Schoen

**Nursing**
Kate Campbell
Farhat Nejrabi
Emily Stevenson
Adrienne Straw
Brianna Weeks

**Nutrition**
Hannah Carroll
Stephanie Mitchell
Samantha Salvatora
Madeleine Southern
The Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) is a remarkable program. In the space of two semesters, young women from all majors in the College of Health and Human Development begin their exciting journey of leadership development. In the fall, to establish a strong foundation for that journey, we focus on Developing Knowledge of Self and Others and Defining Leadership. In spring, we shift to Developing Leadership Skills and Practicing Leadership Skills. The spring semester is particularly exciting for Abby and I; we have the honor of observing students’ myriad leadership styles as they unfurl and blossom. It is a remarkable experience.

The transformation that many of the young women go through would not be possible without the incredible skills and knowledge of individuals involved in the initiative. From mentors and alumni, to guest speakers and faculty presenters, to the internal and external advisory committees, to business and government leaders near and far, these dedicated individuals are key to the learning process. Whether contributing to a Sunday afternoon panel session, participating in a seminar at the Weekend Workshop, or engaging in one-on-one conversations and emails with class members, these committed individuals are crucial to students’ continued leadership development.

During the spring 2011 semester, the students deepened their understanding of what it means to be a leader and put that understanding into action. Let me give you an example of how the process worked. In preparation for the Sunday session on networking, philosophy and leadership, students read two related chapters in the text. They also submitted class participation scores. Students used a rubric to score themselves from 1-6 on the following: comes to class prepared; contributes voluntarily to the conversation about leadership development but does not dominate; shows interest in and respect for others’ views on leadership development; builds on others ideas, synthesizing and expanding the class’s perspective on leadership development; and participates actively in small group work. The rubric encouraged self-reflection about in-class leadership skill development. During the session itself, Cheryl Bonner, director of alumni career services at the Penn State Alumni Association, provided students with an informative, humorous session about the importance of building relationships. In her subsequent reflection paper, one student wrote:

“This is the first I have heard about the three levels of contacts: cold, warm, and hot. Cold contacts are people you have some connections with; warm contacts are friends of friends; and hot contacts are family and friends. So when we network, we are making cold contacts. When we follow up, we are in the process of changing cold contacts to warm contacts, and finally to hot contacts. A Hershey kiss is always popular, because of its shiny foil cover, its small bite size, and it leaves you wanting more. Networking shares the same philosophy. When we network, we should think of a Hershey kiss: make the introduction short and sweet, and then follow up!”

At the same session, we also garnered insights about leadership and philanthropy from Merrill David, executive director of Global Connections, and Ann Ard, executive director of Centre County’s Women’s Resource Center. In their reflection paper on the topic, students linked learning from the session with learning from the class text. And, as you know, deeper understanding occurs when students assimilate information from a variety of sources. For example, one emerging leader wrote:
Another said:

“Another said:

“Another said: “To be a leader one must simply ‘influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal’ (Northouse, 2010, p.3). This may be the textbook definition of ‘leader’, but my leadership philosophy consists of a little bit more. My philosophy is not what makes a leader. It is what makes a successful leader. A leader shows the qualities and the ideas that others want in themselves. A leader must understand their own strengths and weaknesses and when to step back to give others a chance. A leader should act respectfully and professionally; they are role models for others. A leader should use their skills towards the betterment of others. A leader should understand the importance of philanthropy and participate in donating time and money to help others succeed. A leader should lead by example and remember that people are always watching. A leader should own up to mistakes and help others not to make the same ones. A leader must understand that every action has its consequences. A leader has a goal in mind. A leader should make a difference. A leader shapes the future.”

So, I thank you for all that you do to make the Women’s Leadership Initiative an engaging learning process. I also thank you for allowing me to be part of such a unique, innovative program for young women’s leadership development. It is an honor and a privilege.

Kindest regards and have a great summer!

Dr. Careen Yarnal

Faculty Mentor to the Women’s Leadership Initiative
Associate Professor, Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management
Students Undertake Service Learning Project

On March 26, WLI students partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters to host a special event called “Hop into Health.” The event was designed to promote healthy living, both mentally and physically, and to build self-confidence in young ladies through positive role modeling.

The students hosted the group, composed of “littles” and their “bigs,” kicked off with an icebreaker activity. The girls then proceeded to various stations, including a body-tracing activity in which the girls wrote, in their body outlines, their aspirations, goals, and favorite activities. “Power Remix” exercise activity and a “healthy snack” station, where the girls made healthy pizza and smoothies. The afternoon concluded with a “Yarn Activity,” designed to build self esteem.

Yarn Activity

Everyone sits in a circle.
Someone starts with a ball of yarn and wraps it around her wrist once.
She then gives a compliment about someone in the circle and throws the yarn to that person.
The process continues until everyone has received the ball of yarn.
Each girl then cuts her piece and ties it on her wrist as a reminder of her good qualities.
**Class Notes**

### 2009-10

**Samantha Lentini** graduated in December 2010 and has begun working as an associate project manager for BioClinica, a clinical trials service organization in the greater Philadelphia area.

**Michelle Pitt** graduated in May 2011. She accepted a position at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia as an RN and will begin working in July after passing the NCLEX-RN exam.

**Chelsie White** is finishing the first of two years for a master of science degree in health policy and administration at Penn State. In the fall she plans to apply to graduate programs, in hopes of getting her Ph.D. in public health.

### 2008-09

[Samantha Stalley](#) has accepted a position as a research assistant/programmer at Mathematica Policy Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### 2006-07

**Michelle LaBoda** will enter the MBA program at the University of Massachusetts in fall 2011 after she earns her master of science in biomechanics in the summer. She and her fiancé are planning a 2012 wedding.

### 2005-06

**Erin Anderson** has graduated from the Weill Cornell Physician Assistant Program with a certificate of physician assistant and a master of science degree. She recently started a job as an orthopedic physician assistant at a private practice in Englewood, New Jersey.

**Genie Cheng** recently started a new job at the University of California, Santa Barbara in the Student Health, Alcohol and Drug Program, where she is the college alcohol and substance education coordinator. Genie writes, “My experiences at Penn State and working with students definitely prepared me for this career.” She also will be completing a master’s degree in public policy from the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, in June.

### 2004-05

**Morgan (Lambert) Bellamy** got married on March 19, 2011.

**Kristen (Hallowell) Dandar** and her husband, Alan, are expecting their second child, a son, on August 9. Kristen reports: “Our daughter, Allison, is now 13 months old and is absolutely amazing. A future WLI member for sure! I spend most of my time taking care of Allison, but do some personal training part time, along with teaching stroller-fitness classes for other moms and women who are expecting. I love being a mom and I’m very much looking forward to the arrival of our son!”

**Betsy Donaldson** will be starting a Ph.D. program in social and behavioral sciences at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in August. She will be getting married on November 5 to Brian Sherman in Bedford, Pennsylvania.

**Christina (Briner) Smith** is a registered dietician for DaVita Corporation in the greater Pittsburgh area.

**Erica Walbert** will be married on June 18, 2011 to Patrick Ely.

### 2003-04

**Erica (Davic) Dunklebarger** is teaching kindergarten in a public school in Pittsburgh. In late June, she and her husband are expecting their first child. In July, they are moving to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where her husband, Joshua, will be working for Summit Health.

**Jenny Jackson** and her son Max have moved from Chicago, Illinois, to the Washington, DC, area, where Jackson started a new job as the practice affairs analyst with the largest not-for-profit surgical association in the country. In her current position she is responsible for creating the practice management content to assist members in the implementation of things such as the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Physician Quality Reporting Initiative, Electronic Health Records-“Meaningful Use” program, and the Electronic Prescribing program.

### Upcoming Events

- During the 2011-12 academic year, the Women’s Leadership Initiative will pilot a change of date for its workshops. In recent years, workshops had been held on Sundays from 2:00-8:00 p.m. In the coming year, workshops will take place on Fridays from 2:30-8:30 p.m. There will continue to be one “Weekend Workshop” each semester.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 20**
2011-12 Class Retreat, Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 26**
Kickoff Dinner, Nittany Lion Inn

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16**
Friday Session #1, Henderson Building

**SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2**
Weekend Workshop, Nittany Lion Inn and Henderson Building

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21**
Friday Session #2, 101 Health and Human Development East Building

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2**
Friday Session #3, Henderson Building

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9**
Friday Session #4, Henderson Building
Dear WLI Alumni: Please keep us updated by sending us information about a new address, new job, special accomplishment, etc.

Name ____________________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________
City ___________________________ State ________ Zip ________________
Phone ___________________________ E-mail __________________________

New Job/Accomplishments: ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Mail to: Women’s Leadership Initiative
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201 Henderson Building • University Park, PA 16802
Or e-mail the above information to: pab38@psu.edu