Message from the Director

In April, WLI students, their families, and mentors gathered at The Nittany Lion Inn for the annual Celebration Luncheon. The event was an opportunity for everyone to reflect on the ways in which these young women have developed their leadership skills and stepped out of their comfort zones during the past year.

In the last newsletter, Dr. Careen Yarnal, faculty mentor to the WLI, wrote about an activity in which students participated during orientation day. During the activity they were asked to indicate their comfort level with activities such as traveling outside the country or speaking to a stranger. The activity underscored the importance of reaching back to help others who may be out of their comfort zones, and also reaching forward and seeking help when you find yourself outside of your comfort zone.

Throughout the year, Dr. Yarnal and I both witnessed many examples of WLI students reaching back and reaching forward. Through this process, all thirty-one of the young women in the WLI have learned more about leadership, developed their own leadership skills, and gained a greater sense of self-awareness that I hope will benefit them throughout their lives.

During the course of the year, Dr. Yarnal and I thought about how the WLI contributes to our students' development and how we might leverage the curriculum to provide even greater enrichment. We are in the process of reorganizing the curriculum around four main goals: (1) developing knowledge of self and others, (2) defining leadership, (3) developing leadership skills, and (4) practicing leadership through service. We have also reordered parts of the curriculum so that certain concepts and topics are grouped together in deliberate ways. Finally, we have selected a new textbook, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, by P.G. Northouse. We think this text provides a more thorough discussion of leadership concepts and theories that will inform our real-world leadership experiences throughout the year. Later this summer you'll be able to view our fall semester syllabus online, and we'll discuss the curriculum in greater depth in the fall newsletter.

In this newsletter, you can read about our exciting spring semester activities, learn more about how WLI supporters contribute their time and talents via our mentoring program and advisory committees, and read updates from WLI alumni. Thank you for your support of the Women's Leadership Initiative.

Sincerely,

Abigail Diehl
Director
Poem Read at the Celebration Luncheon

When we first began the Women's Leadership Initiative
We had no idea what this journey would be like
And so we began to write

Chapter one started with building relationships
Creating strong personal bonds is a key in life
With our new friendships, openness, and a lot of trust
We were able to climb to new heights

Chapter two we learned the importance of guidance
Our mentors took our hands and led the way
Giving words of wisdom, lessons of failures and success
Helping us move closer to our goals each day

Chapter three was about diversity
Our difference is what makes us unique
Different perspectives, abilities, and being “outside the box”
As future leaders, this is what we must strive to achieve

Chapter four was about figuring out our individual values
Our needs, wants, love… our core
On life’s journey if we don’t know what truly matters to us
Then what exactly are we living for?

Chapter five was about the art of communication
In our future careers we will need it every day
Our body language, confidence, and reputations we keep
Can be stronger than any words we will ever say

Chapter six was about taking risks
When our positions, careers, or even lives as we know it are at stake
These will be defining moments that can change the course of our lives forever
Our preparation, knowledge, and heart will guide the choices we make

Chapter seven we learned how to network
Quite possibly the most important career asset yet
One day we’ll look back on how we made these incredible lives
And it will be because of the amazing people that we’ve met

Chapter eight is about how much being a woman rocks
We can accomplish anything we want while in cute heels and earrings
With ‘impossible’ gaining an apostrophe in our vocabularies
We were able to do some pretty incredible things

Chapter nine was all about women’s health
Healthy living, early prevention, and personal time is necessary each day
As future leaders, wives, and mothers we must not forget about ourselves
Our goals, aspirations, and lives are too high a price to pay

The final chapter, the culmination of all
Is most clear for those around us to see
Intrinsic power to lead
Each of us had it all along
WL I gave us exactly what our leadership skills needed
Just a little tender love and care
Although this is the end of our first novel
Our writing is far from done
Grab your pens for autographs, because we’re on our way up
31 best sellers have just begun

Christine Brown, a member of the 2008-09 WL I class, wrote the following poem and read it at the Celebration Luncheon.

WLI Students Organize Service-Learning Project

During the spring semester, WLI students planned and implemented a service-learning project. Called "I'MPossible," the project was designed to build self-esteem in girls in first through fourth grades. The students gathered ideas on what kinds of activities might help build girls' self-esteem and planned a “fun day” at the State College Area YMCA.

Activity centers for the forty fourth graders included a rock-climbing wall, a dancing station where girls could learn a simple dance or create a dance of their own, a ‘body beautiful’ center where girls could draw a self-portrait, a craft center for a ‘cute and meaningful’ station where they could make bead jewelry and Play-Doh mirrors, and a snack table with fresh veggies and berry smoothies.

Through their service-learning experience, the WLI students learned how to utilize their leadership skills as both members and leaders of a team. “Leadership is about training in our group because they trust in you,” wrote one student. “It is a team effort, one that you win and lose together. I learned this lesson that day and I feel as if it will carry on into many other aspects of my life in the future.”
Women’s Leadership Initiative Travels to Washington, D.C.,

8008-09 Class Updates

Members of the 2008-2009 class of the Women’s Leadership Initiative were busy this summer with travel, internships, summer jobs, and other activities.

Andrea Delacruz is studying abroad in Rome and will then return to State College and do volunteer work for the remainder of the summer.

Beaunn Fagan is working at Penn State in the Women’s Health and Exercise Lab as a research assistant, and will be writing her thesis with Dr. LeAnn Bech in the Center for Childhood Obesity Research. She will also spend two weeks on a mission trip to Rwanda.

Rachel Ferrone is spending five weeks in Australia with International Student Volunteers. While there, she will be doing volunteer conservation work (such as planting trees and maintaining the fences and trails) at Walkabout Wildlife Park in New South Wales, as well as touring the east coast during her free time.

Dena Glazer will be working for the Child Development and Family Council of Centre County. The organization runs after-school and summer programs in several different communities, and Dena is going to be working for the organization all year and plans to continue to work at the summer camp.

Kim Mai is working as a research assistant in the Laboratory of Human Health for Dr. Lori Francis on the Harrisburg Family Study. She also works part-time at Salimetrics as a marketing/branding intern, the plans to volunteer as an EMT at the Pleasant Gap Fire Company.

Sanie McCallen is working in the Student Services Center in the College of Health and Human Development, volunteering at Mount Nittany Medical Center, and taking a class in organic chemistry.

Sasha Mekhi will be traveling to Nairobi, Kenya, to do mission work and to help widowed mothers and children in Kenya.

Anna Miller is interning at the Allegheny County Medical Society, an organization that provides resources for patients and physicians in Pittsburgh. She has two assignments so far. The first is to interview physicians and possibly presidents and CEOs on the Electronic Health Record pilot program in Pittsburgh. Next, she will be looking into the use of unique member identifier numbers instead of Social Security numbers at Highmark.

Caitlin O’Neill is doing an internship at SRA International, Inc., in Fairfax, Virginia. Caitlin was given this opportunity after meeting Mary Good, senior vice president and director of human resources at SRA, during the WLI field trip to Washington, D.C., during the spring semester.

Lauren Robenson is spending the summer in State College with a nursing internship at Mount Nittany Medical Center in the medical oncology unit.

Mackenzie Shields is working as a full-time intern in the Physical Therapy department at the Children’s Therapy Center of Washington Hospital. There, she will be gaining clinical experience as well as facility administration. She plans to graduate this fall and return to Wisconsin to pursue her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

Jennifer Cwynar graduated from Penn State in December 2008 and has been working for CVS Caremark in Pittsburgh.

Megan Garrity will be moving to Baltimore, Maryland, to work as a registered nurse on an infectious disease floor at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

Sara Ross will be working as a registered nurse in the Progressive Care Unit at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

Sarah Smith graduated from Penn State in December 2008 and is employed as a physical therapist aide at an outpatient orthopedic clinic called the Center for Physical Therapy in her hometown in New York. In September she will attend Columbia University to pursue her doctorate in physical therapy. She writes, “Being a part of WLI gave me the confidence to apply to programs I had never thought of, as well as the motivation to professionally conduct my interviews. Thank you again.”

2006-07 Class Updates

Jill Robbins has a new position as front desk manager at a Marriott in Richmond, Virginia.

Emily Sparks Dietterich graduated from Penn State in May 2006 and is now working as a customer service representative for CVS Caremark in Pittsburgh.

Esther Chung is volunteering at Cape Regional Medical Center in its financial aid department during the month of June. In the month of July, she will be participating in a preceptorship program, also at Cape Regional, in which she will be learning about the roles and responsibilities of Veterans Affairs in the Center of Excellence for Women Veterans. Upon graduation, she will be setting up a group program for patients with Down syndrome.

Brittney Spier is interning at a physician practice as an Administrative Assistant.

Tanya Barnhart will be moving to Greenville, North Carolina, to work at Pittman Medical Center as the hospital’s Surgical Intermediate Care Unit.

Erica Chang is working at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the Center for Excellence for Women Veterans. She is facilitating the expansion of the center, from 6,000 to 60,000 square feet. Then, this August, she will be attending Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, to pursue a master of health administration degree.

2005-06 Class Updates

Liz Crane expects to receive an M.A. in counselor education (school counseling) in August 2009 from the University of Central Florida. She currently lives in Orlando, Florida.

Redham Patel received her master of public health degree from Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health in May. She is currently working as assistant director of development and alumni affairs in the School of Public Health.

One of the highlights of the spring semester was a field trip to Washington, D.C. By traveling to a location where both Penn State alumni and women leaders are plentiful, the students had the opportunity to meet women in their workplaces and to see “leadership in action.”

The group departed State College early Friday morning and arrived in the city before lunch. After checking in at the hotel, the students took the Metro to the location of their first meeting—Humphrey Building, the home of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). There, the students met Dr. Wanda Jones ’75 SCI, deputy assistant secretary for health (women’s health) and director of the Office on Women’s Health at HHS.

Dr. Christine Lewis Taylor ’77 G, ’86 G NUTR, former president of the Organization of Nurse Executives, was also present. She wrote, “All of the women inspired me to think about my career in politics.”

The trip was a tremendous success. One student wrote, “Some of the women inspired me to fully realize and take advantage of my Penn State connections.” Another wrote, “It just made me realize that in the many opportunities, choices, and decisions that I have made to get me where I am today.”

Women’s Leadership Initiative Travels to Washington, D.C.,
A survey conducted of WLI mentors and students revealed that contact—in any form—is key to satisfaction with the mentoring experience. The mentoring program is one of the most valuable components of the Women’s Leadership Initiative. Each student is paired with a mentor—a woman leader, usually someone who is working in the student’s desired career field. Mentors and mentees are in touch throughout the year, typically by e-mail and phone, although many students meet with their mentors in person during the year.

In the survey, all of the students who reported being in touch with their mentor at least twice per month were very or somewhat satisfied with their mentoring experience. Of those who reported contact less than monthly, nearly 60 percent were very or somewhat unsatisfied. Students who had more contact with their mentors were also much more likely to feel that the mentoring experience deepened their understanding of leadership or that it broadened their perspectives. Of those students who said they were in touch with their mentor less than monthly, about 85 percent said that their goals were not being met, while all of the students who were in touch with their mentors at least twice per month reported that their goals were being met.

Sunie McCallen and her mentor, Beth Bates, spent time together throughout the year. Sunie, a Nursing student, was spending the academic year studying at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, where Beth is an instructor in nursing. The two met for coffee, volunteered at Beth’s church, and went to dinner with another WLI student, Lauren Robinson, and her mentor, Judy Dillon. “I couldn’t have asked for a more amazing mentor,” says Sunie. “I learned so much from Beth on both a professional and a personal level. The relationship I built with her over the course of the year is something I will cherish, and that I am sure will continue throughout my career.”

Julie St-Merand traveled to El Salvador with her mentor, Lorrie Gawryla, a registered nurse and health educator with Hope International Services. During the nine-day trip, they journeyed to three villages, a men’s penitentiary, and a boy’s orphanage; conducted medical clinics and health teachings; and gave out hygiene packers, clothing, and nutrition supplements. Julie got to practice as a nurse with Lorrie, conduct physical exams, and interpret.

“In general, the experience was extremely enlightening,” says Julie. “To physically see what people in third-world conditions endure and how grateful the inhabitants were for just the little and temporary aid we provided, was heartwarming. The experience made me consider more third-world nursing or volunteer mission trips when I graduate. I was so lucky to have met Lorrie through WLI. The trip, her insight as a mentor, and the opportunity to give back is one of my most memorable moments to look back on.”

The survey also revealed what kinds of topics mentors and mentees discussed. Mentors reported that they most frequently shared their experiences, provided their mentees with feedback on their goals and objectives, gave advice on career development, provided recommendations on training or education, and interacted with the mentees socially.

Mentors were generally very pleased with their mentoring experience. Ninety-three percent were very or somewhat satisfied with their overall experience and all of the respondents said that they would recommend the experience to others. One mentor wrote, “It has given me an opportunity to share experiences and to feel that I am doing something that really matters to someone else. I wish I could have benefited from such an opportunity when I was in school.”
Fall 2009 Events
(all sessions are at the Bennett Pierce Living Center, Henderson Building unless otherwise noted)

Saturday, August 22
Orientation and Retreat, Shaver's Creek

Friday, August 28
Kickoff Dinner, Nittany Lion Inn

Sunday, August 30
Sunday Session #1

Thursday, September 17
PA Governor’s Conference for Women, Philadelphia

October 2-4
Weekend Workshop

Sunday, November 1
Sunday Session #2

Sunday, November 15
Sunday Session #3

Sunday, December 6
Sunday Session #4

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: ___________________________________
_____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________

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Or e-mail the above information to: pab38@psu.edu