Message from the Director

The holidays are already a distant memory, but it is hopefully not too late to wish you a happy new year from all of us here. I believe we had a great fall semester, and some of the highlights are featured in this newsletter. During the lectures and workshops we inundated the new students with numerous metaphors—the glass ceiling, the glass cliff, the labyrinth, and the second shift, to name a few. They are ready to face their future, taking it all in. On the assumption that you cannot have too much of a good thing, we introduced the students again to some “evergreens.” They attended lectures on business presence (and an etiquette dinner is in the works for February), relational aggression, résumé writing, health issues, and conflict resolutions. They interpreted their personal results from the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator and they know now how to be savvy in the financial realm. In the meantime they had fun too. You will find at the end of this newsletter the dates for the spring semester workshops, and please feel free to join us. We would love to welcome you and share the learning.

The WLI team extends the greatest of tidings and wishes everyone a prosperous and healthy 2008.

Marya Verbeek
Weekend Workshop a Success

By Heather Toth

On October 19, the Women’s Leadership Initiative experienced its first weekend workshop of the year. The workshop focused on such concepts as diversity, leadership and communication. At the close of the weekend a service learning project to be completed by the students was introduced.

Friday night saw the women braving several leadership activities and a diversity exercise. Saturday brought highly-anticipated results from the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, which the students completed earlier in the semester. These results allowed students to understand themselves but also to learn about their peers. The day also included a segment on business etiquette: students absorbed a plethora of information that can be summarized as “what to do and what not to do” in the business world. “I plan to apply the business etiquette practices that we learned from Jean O’Brien into my daily life,” said one student. Another commented, “I was already able to use the new tips from the business presence lecture to help me get an interview with a management company I would like to intern with this summer.”

Finally, Sunday included a discussion revolving around women in politics, a panel discussion on women in politics and risk taking and a presentation by Dr. Donna Korzick on service learning.

According to a survey conducted by the WLI team, the students hailed the weekend as a success. Among the highest-rated parts of the weekend were the Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory presentation and the diversity presentation.

WLI Welcomes New Staff Member

In August 2007, Kristin Wilson left the WLI office to pursue a degree in nursing. She worked with the program for almost five years and is very much missed by the staff in the College of Health and Human Development and by the WLI students. We wish her all the best in her new career.

Pam Baier replaces Kristin as the WLI staff assistant. Formerly a staff assistant in the outreach office of the Eberly College of Science and previously serving almost ten years with the State College Area School District as an elementary school secretary, Pam brings to her new role her customer service skills and years of experience with students of all ages. Cooking, cross country skiing, running, spending time with her family, and caring for her horses and dogs are among the many things she enjoys in her spare time. She resides in Penns Valley with her husband Norbert and their three children, Norb, Bianca, and Greta.

WLI Students Participate in Home Economics Alumni Reunion

Two WLI students were part of the College of Health and Human Development’s 2007 Home Economics Alumni Reunion. Rebecca Ferguson starred in a vignette about the “old” College (see photo) and Emily Sparks was a hostess at the reception area. Both were members of the 2006-2007 class of WLI.
Over the last year I have been working with Dr. Stephen Petrill at Ohio State. He used to work at Penn State and was one of my favorite professors. His research project is called the Western Reserve Reading Project (WRRP) and I am the project coordinator. The WRRP is a longitudinal twin study that examines both the environmental and genetic influences of early reading skills in children from Kindergarten to adolescence. My duties include managing the flow of data between Ohio State and the other universities that are in collaboration with our research, such as Case Western University, Virginia Tech, and the University of Illinois. I also manage a group of field consultants in the Cincinnati area who visit the families’ homes to collect data from the twins on a variety of different measures, including reading comprehension and math skills. Additionally, I manage a team of research assistants here at Ohio State who execute all of the entry and storage of data collected by the field testers. I am also responsible for the administration of the research grant, which includes the monitoring of funds for in-office costs, project supply ordering, and compensation payments made to both the subjects and consultants of the research project. In addition, I get to interact with the families in the project and communicate directly with the parents concerning their twins’ progress. Fortunately, all of our families absolutely love the project so it is always a joy to work with them because they are so eager to participate.

Since I have started this position, I have utilized a number of leadership skills that I learned from WLI. For example, I have learned how to manage a group of people by creating channels of open communication between employees and co-workers and by always remaining reliable to encourage consistency among the staff. Also, probably one of the most valuable skills that I have learned in this position is how to be accountable—to my supervisor, my employees, and also to the participants of the research project. Very early on, I began to internalize the importance of our research project by adopting the vision that had already been put in place by Dr. Petrill and his former research team before I arrived. After that, I was able to personalize the position that I was given, and was able to serve the project by remaining consistent and accountable, doing every last duty with excellence.

I hope all of the WLI students are doing well and taking advantage of all aspects of the program.

Many of you know that I was working with the geriatric population in my first job out of college. Dealing with death on a daily basis became very hard for me to handle outside of work. Of course at work I put a smile on my face, as not to get the residents more depressed than they already were. I actually looked through many of the notes I took during the WLI to help me re-establish what my values were and what my goals were. It was a hard decision to make but a great one. So at the end of August I started a new job, at an outdoor leadership education school called Inner Quest, located in McLean, Virginia. It is very similar to Shaver's Creek and I run a high ropes course similar to the one we did at Bob Ricketts' cabin. I am constantly being reminded of the importance of communication and teamwork, especially being the facilitator of these programs. So far my journey after college has been fantastic and the WLI currently comes up in my thoughts quite often.

I also did a lot of quote searching while I was in limbo about whether to resign or not, and this one by Mark Twain helped me to realize life is too short not to enjoy every minute of it: “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”
On November 8, thirteen WLI students traveled to Philadelphia for the Annual Pennsylvania Governor’s Conference for Women. This conference was attended by 5,000 women. Its theme was “Invest in Yourself” and covered issues such as investing in health, investing in the future, and investing in leadership.

We started our day visiting the booths set up by the groups to the conference. Following some networking, we opened up the day by listening to Nancy Giles, a regular commentator for CBS News and Jay Thomas’ sidekick on New York’s Jammin 105. We also listened to Indra K. Nooyi, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo. Both of their speeches were not only inspirational, but also humorous, covering issues such as balancing family and work and investing in oneself. We also learned a new metaphor: the second shift.

We split into morning sessions with topics including leadership, money, stress management, ethics, and politics.

Following our morning session, we ate a healthy lunch while listening to Governor Ed Rendell, who encouraged women to pursue careers in engineering and computer science. Dr. Doris Kearns Goodwin, a historian and NBC news analyst, was the keynote speaker.

During the afternoon we again attended workshops covering issues such as investing in one’s future, protecting the planet, wellness, body language, and public speaking.

At the end of our day, we came back together to listen to a panel speaking on philanthropy with activist Majora Carter; Evelyn H. Lauder, senior corporate vice president of The Estee Lauder Companies Inc.; Dr. Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation; and journalist Tracey Matisak. The whole day was truly informative and inspiring. It was great to be surrounded by such a large group of strong, empowering women for the day!

WLI Kickoff Dinner

The WLI kickoff dinner took place on September 21. The featured speaker was Deidre Dlugonski, an alumna of the first class of WLI. She talked about the influence the WLI had had on her over the last four years, especially the tips she had learned in the etiquette classes.
Stephanie Mazzeo-Caputo is senior vice president, organizational development for HealthEd, a health communications agency that develops patient-centered educational programs for clients in the pharmaceutical industry. Stephanie's role is to help the organization navigate its way through growth and change to achieve long-term success while continuing to be true to its ideals and culture.

Through the Women's Leadership Initiative Stephanie has mentored the following women: Jocelyn Murphy '05 BBH; Tara Mohamed '06 BBH; Joy Powell '07 BBH; Kristin Donofrio '08 NURS; and Esther Chung '09 HPA.

Stephanie enjoys keeping in touch with her past mentees. Because both Jocelyn and Tara live in New Jersey, Stephanie is able to see them often. Jocelyn works for a pharmaceutical advertising agency in New York City and Tara is a child life specialist at a hospital in New Jersey. Both women are excelling in their careers and it brings Stephanie great joy to watch them, and all of her former mentees, blossom and mature both personally and professionally.

According to Stephanie, “Mentoring gives me the opportunity to live life again through the eyes of a young woman on the precipice of starting her career.” She continued, “It is restorative to see the world from an unconditional point of view through the eyes of optimism and endless opportunity. My mentees keep me honest and earnest.” For Stephanie it is a gift to be able to share the wisdom and insights she has gained through the years and to have it accepted with open arms. She believes the WLI plants the seeds of leadership and lays a foundation that will be invaluable to the women participating throughout their careers and lives. Stephanie also values each student's uniqueness. Every mentoring relationship provides her with a new opportunity to embrace individual differences and to grow personally.

Stephanie's 2007-2008 class mentee is Esther Chung. “Esther's energy, spirit and positive attitude are contagious,” she said. “These women are so incredibly special. I get more from them than I could ever articulate.”

Kerri L. Clark works for the Federal Highway Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, in the Office of Human Resources. She is a human resources specialist with a concentration in employee relations. In this capacity Kerri consults with managers in headquarters and in the field offices to help them deal with complex and sometimes sensitive employee issues, whether it be counseling poor performers or disciplining employees. This position allows Kerri to work with all levels of the organization including the most senior leaders. Kerri rotates through other areas of Human Resources and the agency as a whole to learn more about the overall structure of the organization.

The Women's Leadership Initiative has given Kerri the opportunity to mentor two students thus far: Maggie Neil and Cara Bell (both Recreation, Park and Tourism Management students). Kerri states, "I was first affiliated with the WLI when I served on a panel to talk about goal setting. I was so impressed with this group that I wanted to become a mentor.” Kerri communicates with her mentees through email in order to “catch up on the adventures of life.” In addition, Kerri and Cara attended a football game together this past season.

As noted above, Kerri was so impressed with the foundation in leadership that the WLI offered the students that she wanted to do all she could to help with the transition from university life to the "real world." She feels the WLI workshops and other sessions are practical, serve as a forum for strong bonding, and provide opportunities to grow professionally.

Kerri reports she has learned additional skills from interacting with the students and attending sessions. "Learning is a lifelong activity. There are many who came before me who have shared their wisdom, stressed being resilient, and taught me the importance of continuous learning for both personal and professional goals. I have made it a goal to help those who follow me.”
The Women’s Leadership Initiative has affected me in so many ways…

1. I feel comfortable in almost any situation and talking to almost anyone. This past May, former WLI director Dr. Liz Mullens was speaking at the Glenfiddich Forum in Leesburg, Virginia. I didn’t know anyone else who would be there, but I went anyway just because I wanted to.

2. I know there is something to be gained out of pretty much any experience—even if it’s just a good story to tell your friends later about how awful it was.

3. I have a better understanding of my personality traits and consequently what strengths I bring to a group, the approach I take as a leader, and what I can do to help others. I know how I’m likely to react to certain things, and I can think more critically about how others see me.

4. I appreciate the concept of “giving back” much more after seeing the incredible contributions made by the benefactors and staff of WLI and the significant advantages my group had because of them. Seeing how these people were willing to invest so much in us made us all feel very special, which is now reflected through increased confidence in just about everyone who has been a part of the program.

5. Because my WLI mentoring experience didn’t live up to expectations, I have some insight on what makes a good mentoring relationship. Though I’m a bit young, I have a RPTM “mentee” already!

6. WLI was definitely a factor in my decision to return to school. It made me realize that lifelong learning is critical and that I don’t have to “settle” for anything.

7. It emphasized the importance of networking—not only meeting new people for myself but also introducing others for their benefit.

8. It gave me the opportunity to make a speech in front of a couple hundred people, which was something quite different for me—and I found out I liked it.

9. I know there are lots of people willing to help and that it’s okay to ask if they will.

10. It made me realize the importance of always being conscious of the impression you are making—you never know how influential the person sitting across the table listening to your conversation could be.

11. WLI has taught me that getting older doesn’t mean you have to be boring or stop having fun. You can present a professional image while still maintaining your personal character.

Since WLI, I have:
- worked with the WLI planning team on an independent study, including coordinating the weekend workshop in Washington, DC (fall 2005)
- spent a semester in Charleston, South Carolina, working as an intern for the Family Circle Cup, a professional women’s tennis tournament (spring 2006)
- moved to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to work as the director of the Lakewood Conference Center (June 2006 – April 2007)
- moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, to work as a research assistant for a Ph.D. student’s dissertation on physical activity in residential and day camps (summer 2007) (Hopefully we will be presenting this research at the ACA conference next year.)
- just started graduate school at NC State – working on my M.S. with an emphasis on leisure and health
- I am also working as a research assistant for Dr. Jason Bocarro, Dr. Karla Henderson, and Dr. Myron Floyd, doing miscellaneous projects including serving on the planning committee for a physical activity research summit as part of the IPARC project, and doing data work with IPARC and SOPARC—I will probably be doing some data collection and surveying with IPARC and possibly a community garden that will be designed to promote nutrition and physical activity.
- In addition to my P&R classes, I’m taking a community nutrition class with a service-learning component and would like to take more nutrition and public health classes in the upcoming semesters.
Wendy Owen ’85 RC PK kicks off Distinguished Alumni Speaker Series

On November 1, twelve students attended a presentation by Wendy Owen in the HUB Auditorium. Ms. Owen, who is vice president, strategic communications initiatives and global services of Lockheed Martin Information Systems & Global Services, was the inaugural speaker in the College of Health and Human Development Distinguished Alumni Speaker Series. In addition to holding a bachelor’s degree in Recreation and Parks from Penn State, she is one of the Women’s Leadership Initiative’s “Five Stars.” Her speech was entitled, “The Space Program after the Shuttle Columbia Tragedy: A Story of the Human Spirit.”

Some reflections of the students who attended:

“It was a great honor to be able to listen to and learn from one of WLI’s “Five Stars.” Ms. Owen began her speech with a timeline. She described how she went from Recreation and Parks at Penn State to a vice president at Lockheed Martin Information Systems & Global Services. For me, this was a great start to the talk because it made me realize that even though I may not get my “dream job” right out of college, every job and experience will lead me to where I need to be. It was encouraging to hear of the many different jobs she took and also in so many different places. It is always very enlightening and encouraging to hear of women who can have a family life and still be a very successful woman.”

“Wendy Owen answered the audience questions very clearly and used good examples. I was impressed with how she answered the question about why the United States government should fund NASA while there are problems here on Earth. She responded that we could never solve all the problems and that if the United States had tried to fix all the problems in the east before westward expansion, we would have never expanded our country. She compared astronauts to the frontiersmen moving out west into an undiscovered land and risking their lives.”

“When Ms. Owen mentioned The Women’s Leadership Initiative in her speech, it further showed how recognized and respected this program is. I appreciate Wendy Owen supporting the belief to make WLI a reality and I am proud I had the opportunity to meet her.”

“I really enjoyed the lecture tonight. I have always supported the space program and attended lift offs, so when the Columbia event happened, I was very affected. It was very interesting to hear the story from a very different perspective. After the lecture I was able to have a direct conversation with Ms. Owen and we discussed medical advances that will be made because of the space program.”

“A great aspect of [Ms. Owen’s] speech that really stood out to me was her passion. I could tell that her interest and involvement really meant something to her. That is a very important quality to possess when you choose a career.”

“It was very interesting to hear how drastically different Ms. Owen’s dream job is now compared to what she thought she wanted. I find it amazing that she became so educated in space and technology after her schooling in recreation and park management and considering she was doing poorly in her computer class. I know very little about the space program so it was great to learn a little more and see how women are making a difference in that occupation.”
SPRING SEMESTER WORKSHOPS:

Sunday sessions:
• March 2

Weekend workshops:
• February 8-10
• April 4-6

Celebration luncheon:
• April 26

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 ___________________________ Email ___________________________

New Job/Accomplishments: ___________________________________
_____________________________________________________________
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