

## Spotlight on ILA Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change. We are pleased to shine an ILA spotlight on the programs of our members. If you would like to nominate yourself or another ILA institutional member to be featured on these pages, please contact ILA at [ila@ila-net.org](mailto:ila@ila-net.org).

### Spotlight on Vertical's Leadership Expeditions:

## Antarctica '09: Developing Leadership in an Extreme Environment Prepares Fifty Wharton MBAs for the Future

by Penny Bamber, ILA Member



*"Taking short cuts, with ambiguous information requires rigorous vigilance and a high level of adaptability within the team to respond to changes,"* noted the team leader. Far from the corporate classroom, this lesson was taking place in the icy landscapes of Antarctica. He had convinced his team to follow a shorter route across the snow-covered King George Island. As the team made rapid progress compared to their peers who were following the more traditional route across the glacier, their competitive drive overshadowed any call for caution. The result – the team quite literally found themselves knee-deep in mud as dense as concrete.

This team formed part of Vertical's fifty person group in Antarctica December 27 - January 4, 2009 from the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania. This was the sixth offering of the Wharton Antarctica Leadership Venture.

12. Shortly after launching the Wharton Leadership Ventures initiative in 2001, Dr. Michael Useem, Director of Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management joined forces with Chilean entrepreneur and Leadership Professor, Rodrigo Jordan to develop creative opportunities

for MBA students to *"engage in sets of hands on experiences for exploring and mastering the capabilities for effective individual and team leadership in business and beyond."* Since then, these opportunities have included expeditions to Antarctica, Patagonia (Torres del Paine and Pumalin), Tierra del Fuego, and San Pedro de Atacama.

Antarctica in particular provides an excellent forum for developing and consolidating leadership skills. Its extreme nature tests participants' perseverance and highlights the importance of both self-awareness and empathy in ways that cannot be achieved in the warm, comfortable four-walled settings of the classroom. Furthermore, weather patterns are varied and unpredictable reinforcing the need for a solid combination of in-depth preparation and utmost flexibility on the part of all who venture into this freezing territory.

These programs are designed to get MBAs and young executives think-

ing about the bigger picture, issues such as these that are critical to the future, while at the same time affording concrete opportunities for experimenting with leadership styles, discovering how things go right in teams, but often, more importantly uncovering why things go wrong. These lessons, evoked as they may be by harsh weather conditions, exhaustion or a wrong turn that leaves the team exposed, drive the leadership learning home. Trained facilitators and guides



This year's group at Prioda

make sure that the team remains out of harm's way, however they are also present to make sure that these learning opportunities are not overlooked. Daily discussions route out issues of self-awareness and emotional intelligence, communication skills and decision-making styles and frameworks while simple navigation exercises, fundamental to survival in Antarctica, provide a great metaphor to help the students see that there can be many different ways to reach the same objective.

The first step in the program is to prepare the teams to be fully auton-

mous. Technical workshops teach the teams to set up camp, cook, and navigate. The guides then take on the role of coach, acting as a safety net, and providing a solid example of teamwork based on core values that have often been identified by onlookers as passion, excellence, generosity, and inclusion. Provided with this base, the teams are then given the freedom to create their own expedition and experience.



Antarctic Skua in Flight.

More important than the conditions provided by this extreme environment for transactional learning are the opportunities for transformational impact inspired by this Continent. One key example is provided by the story of Thomas Arnold, one of the first MBA students to boldly venture into Antarctica with Vertical. Always an outdoor enthusiast, Tom was overcome by man's impact on the warming of the climate in Antarctica and returned to school after the program to found Terrapass [www.terrapass.com](http://www.terrapass.com) with some classmates. Terrapass has since grown to be a household name whose core function is raising awareness of our personal carbon footprints and aggregating small individual carbon offset contributions to purchase and retire carbon emissions certificates. His title? CEO – Chief Environmental Officer.

Arnold's experience along with Professor Jordan's recent expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula with National

Geographic to investigate the impact of global warming, inspired Vertical to encourage Wharton to incorporate a new dimension highlighting Climate Change into the program. The Leadership Ventures thus extended the invitation to participate in the program to the Director of UPENN's new Initiative for Global Environmental Leadership, Professor Eric Orts, and three students from its Masters program.

This cross-collaboration between disciplines provided opportunities for unprecedented learning. The students interacted on an informal basis – those with business backgrounds raising questions on how to balance the bottom line needs of a company with environmental concerns. Even more interesting was the debate that surfaced amongst the international students regarding the responsibilities of business leaders in developing countries where they often don't have the luxury of new technologies or the threat of government regulations to provide a framework for environmental decision making. In that setting, they wondered, how does the business leader justify expensive environmental measures



Antarctic Chinstrap Penguins

to a board that are focused on the more important goal of survival? Over most of the past decade in running these programs, we have witnessed that the freedom to create one's own expedition experience combined with the daily routine and activities in the program have provided ample experiences for learning.

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### What's a Leadership Expedition?

A Leadership Expedition is a structured learning experience through which participants improve their leadership and teamwork skills. The goal is to provide them with opportunities to work in teams, to lead groups of their peers, and to get first-hand experience in leadership. Participants are taken into an environment with which they are not familiar and where information and resources are limited, typically, given our expertise in the field, in the outdoors. This environment is used to provide numerous and, more importantly, genuine, leadership and team challenges for the participants. These situations require forward-thinking, rapid decision-making, conflict management and excellent communication skills. They require a bias for action and creativity.

Through these programs, Vertical provides an environment in which participants can approach the development of their leadership style from a number of different angles. Programs can focus on instilling values through a combination of teamwork and community service activities, enhancing tolerance to uncertainty and adversity by trekking in rainy Patagonia to fine-tuning their communication skills on a glacier crossing in Antarctica.

# JOB Listings



Crossing the Bellingshausen Dome, King George Island, Antarctica

However, it's the unexpected nature of the environment that truly puts the participants' leadership skills to the test. None more so than in the final days of the 2007 program.

The departure date from Antarctica had come and gone without the arrival of the DASH-7 plane, which was grounded in Punta Arenas due to bad weather. Always prepared for this eventuality, the guiding team had kept the student teams busy with activities.



Daily Group Briefing

However, the tension levels were clearly beginning to rise as the participants fretted about flights missed, pending job interviews and the start of classes. When the plane did arrive two days late, the complexity further increased – only half of the group would be able to travel, as the rest of the plane was needed for the medical evacuation of a passenger on one of the many cruise ships that explore Antarctica. The rest of the group would have to wait patiently for the next opportunity that the plane could land in King George.

14. Rather than taking the matter into their own hands, the guiding team recognized this "Heifetz" moment to pass the adaptive problem back to the

student teams. It was a great learning moment. The consequences were real: to be stranded in Antarctica for an indeterminate amount of time with limited food and fuel supplies. Reflecting on their decision-making once back in the cozy hotel in Chile, the students realized how far they had come during the course of the week. The group had structured themselves rapidly, making fair and self-less decisions as to who would go and who would stay. When asked what they had based this on, the response was straightforward, "once you have your team's core values established and understood, the rest is easy."

## Did you know?

Vertical runs programs to:

Antarctica  
Himalayas  
Kilimanjaro  
Patagonia  
Easter Island  
Atacama Desert  
Mt. Elbrus, Russia

Learn more at:

[www.leadershipexpeditions.com](http://www.leadershipexpeditions.com)

## Union Programming Coordinator

Leadership Center, Fort Lewis College

Durango, Colorado, USA

Closing Date: 5/10/2009

[http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View\\_Job.asp?DBID=1217](http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View_Job.asp?DBID=1217)

## Associate Dean for Student and External Affairs

Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond

Richmond, VA

Closing Date: Until Filled

[http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View\\_Job.asp?DBID=1216](http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View_Job.asp?DBID=1216)

## Leadership Studies Faculty

Leadership & American Studies, Christopher Newport University

Newport News, VA, USA

Closing Date: 5/18/2009

[http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View\\_Job.asp?DBID=1215](http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View_Job.asp?DBID=1215)

## Assistant Professor

Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services, Central Michigan University

Mt. Pleasant, MI

Closing Date: Until Filled

[http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View\\_Job.asp?DBID=1214](http://ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/View_Job.asp?DBID=1214)

**For complete descriptions & application procedures, please visit the ILA Web site link listed at the end of each partial description. To view all announcements go to:**  
<http://www.ila-net.org/LeadershipJobs/index.asp>

To place an announcement in the Member Connector, please contact us at [ila@ila-net.org](mailto:ila@ila-net.org).