

Member Spotlight

**CENTENNIAL CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP
HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES**

By Amy Forbes, Associate Director, Centennial Center for Leadership



It is 4:30pm on a Monday during the fall semester. Downstairs in the seminar classroom, Hobart and William Smith students in the HWS Leads certificate program are finishing up a session in their Leadership Theory I class. Outside in the front entry room, students on the CCL advisory board gather and wait for their meeting to start. Soon student finalists in this year's The Pitch contest will arrive for their pitch practice session with the CCL staff. Upstairs, a student preps for her interview with a Leadership Café guest. It is a typically busy day at the Centennial Center for Leadership (CCL).

The CCL is a rapidly growing office at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, a small, private, liberal arts institution in Geneva, NY. The CCL's endowment was secured in 2008 and a building on South Main Street was renovated to house its operation. Early initiators wanted the office to offer opportunities that fostered leadership learning for HWS students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community. The CCL was placed organizationally in academic affairs with a direct reporting line to the provost. Consequently, it has been dedicated to academic enrichment as well as applied learning experiences from its inception.



Liberal arts teach students to think holistically and to reason intuitively across disciplines. Today, such environments provide important experiences that deepen a sense of self in students while developing their intellectual capacity to synthesize ideas. As a liberal arts institution, HWS has embraced the center's mission. "First, the Centennial Center provides leadership

development for student leaders," says Susan Pliner, associate dean and director of the Centennial Center for Leadership. "Second, it engages in the study of leaders and leadership."

As the interface for leadership work on its campus, the CCL made a clear choice not to subscribe to one model or static definition of leadership. Rather, we teach a variety of theoretical models and practical applications. Although we have expanded into three areas of emphasis, which grew out of our students' interests in global, community, and entrepreneurial leadership, we are anchored by our interdisciplinary approach to leadership development. We believe an on-going practice of examining beliefs and values, embracing work within and across differences, and aligning passion with thoughtful purpose. This begets authentic, culturally-relevant leaders who have the capacity to solve significant challenges.

At the center of our leadership development work is the HWS Leads Leadership Certificate Program. It is designed to purposefully guide students in the study of leadership as well as offer the opportunity to develop as a leader. Throughout the program, students reflect upon themselves as leaders (Leading

Self), the complexities of leading a group of diverse others (Leading Others), and the effects of situational and cultural contexts (Leadership in Action). Certificate requirements include: Leadership Theory I (foundational leadership course), Public Speaking (technical leadership course), Leadership Theory II (advanced leadership course), Leadership Practicum (one semester in a substantial leadership role), and

Leadership E-Portfolio, which spans work derived from all three courses and the practicum.

In addition, the CCL offers the Leadership Institute (LI), a two-and-a-half day professional conference experience that provides students their choice of different concurrent sessions as well as reflective home group meetings that build community and assist students with the development of an individual action plan. Furthering leadership development for campus leaders is our Discovery program, which offers two six-week long workshop series designed both to introduce leadership techniques (Explorations) and to create a lab experience for individuals in significant leadership roles (Leadership Lab).



Currently, the CCL is expanding into three focus areas: entrepreneurial, global, and community leadership. Largely due to programming, entrepreneurial leadership at HWS has undergone rapid growth in the last four years. The Stu Lieblein '90 Pitch, a student entrepreneurial leadership contest, was created in 2011 in response to the yearlong academic theme at the time, The Power of an Idea. Students develop ideas for products, services, or organizations (for-profit or nonprofit) and compete for a \$10,000 grant. To support the contest, the CCL now offers HWS IdeaLab, a start-up accelerator program designed to power student ideas. The CCL also debuted the Innovation Academy where each Pitch semi-finalists returns to campus the week prior to the start of spring classes. They engaged in five days of intensive entrepreneurial leadership training in topics such as innovation, idea iteration, accounting, marketing, negotiations, and funding strategies with faculty.

Much like its entrepreneurial leadership efforts, the CCL has expanded its focus into community leadership. For the third year now, the CCL has offered its Youth Leadership College at West Street Elementary school

in the Geneva school district. The Youth Leadership College (YLC) is a semester long program that provides leadership development to elementary school children. The program was developed by a HWS alum as part of her master's thesis in 2013. Our leadership students have worked with 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders, largely using our signature model of Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leadership in Action.

In an effort to grow its global leadership development, the CCL will launch its newest program this spring. In a joint partnership with Stellenbosh in South Africa, Beyond Borders offers junior and senior students a chance to build an international perspective by examining a Millennial Development goal with a peer at Stellenbosh's

leadership academy. Supported as an independent study at HWS, students will work with faculty advisors to develop a viable solution paper after engaging in a series of workshops designed to foster creative problem-solving, global development, sustainability, ethics, and multi-national goal setting.

"It's been wonderful work," reflects Pliner of the CCL's development. "When we establish leadership as a behavior that can be learned and provide experiential learning opportunities where it can be practiced, students have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to transfer their academic training into practical real-world application. Further, their creative problem-solving abilities will enable them to respond to contemporary challenges that really matter. These are the leaders that will shape the 21st Century." The staff at the Centennial Center for Leadership is grateful for the colleagues and community that allow us to do this good work.

For more information about the CCL, please go to our website: www.hws.edu/leadership.

Whether they are starting new leadership programs or researching thorny questions, nurturing young leaders or coaching established CEOs, leading innovative workshops or working as change-agents in their communities, ILA members make a difference around the world. Share your organization's story in our member spotlight. Contact Debra DeRuyver at ddeRuyver@ila-net.org.