



Alliance Partners Welcome PSLA '07

By CHRIS BAUDY
2007 PSLA Team Leader

Offering words of encouragement and challenge, Pioneers in Education (PiE) Alliance Partners Dr. Phyllis Buchanan, DuPont, and Antwayne Ford, Enlightened, Inc., greeted the class of 2007. "Today marks the beginning of a new journey for each of you," said Ford. "You are preparing today to lead tomorrow's workforce."



Dr. Phyllis Buchanan, DuPont, Office of Education, addresses the PSLA Class of 2007.

The class of 2007, diverse in ethnicity and academic disciplines, represents 24 universities and colleges. The 40 students come from 21 states and the country of Lebanon, by way of Prairie View A&M.

Giving a general overview of the Academy, Dr. Buchanan acknowledged the excellent support from the primary PSLA sponsors: Siemens Foundation, Bank of America, Enlightened, Inc., Pioneer Hybrid International, ViewSet Corporation and the Page One Foundation.

Echoing the sentiments of the entire PSLA team, Dr. Buchanan told the students, "Each of you is laying the foundation for not only your personal life, but your professional career as well." Further, she challenged students to make the most of their two weeks together at George Washington University.

PSLA Career Day a Success

By DWIGHT J. LACY
University of Kentucky

Every 45 seconds, a new job becomes available. American companies are losing employees at an alarming rate. Within the next decade, 32 million Baby Boomers will retire, leaving a significant void in the national workforce, according to the Futurework Institute (NY, 2006).

Motivated by those staggering statistics, the PiE Alliance developed the Leadership Academy to prepare underserved and underrepresented college students to lead the 21st century workforce.

Career Day at Bank of America is an integral part of their strategy. "We want to expose our students to these types of leadership training opportunities," said COL Paige, "and introduce extraordinary students to senior leaders."

On June 6, selected companies and PSLA sponsors participated in the first PSLA Career Day, hosted by Bank of America at its stunning downtown Washington, DC, office. Students seized the opportunity to network and establish relationships with representatives from such organizations as the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Army Small Business Office, the White House Initiative for Historically Black Colleges & Universities, the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, DuPont, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Ciber, Inc., to name just a few.

Students also heard from Dr. Earnestine Psalmonds, Program Director, Graduate Research Fellowship Program, National Science Foundation, who gave advice and guidance on applying to graduate school.

As he welcomed the class, our Bank of America host, Willie Tate, Senior Account Manager, noted, "Bank of America welcomes the opportunity to support PSLA. Scholars are a great return on investment for us."

The day was a success. The students left with fresh ideas and a new set of relationships—just what the Alliance partners envisioned.



Willie Tate (left), Bank of America, talks with PSLA scholars.

Know Your Responsibility

By IDRIS ROBINSON
Virginia State University

On Tuesday, June 12, Dr. Troy Justesen, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education for the U.S. Department of Education, gave a presentation unlike any the PSLA interns had heard during the first week of the Academy. “Know your responsibility,” Dr. Justesen constantly told the students, reminding them that it is this generation’s responsibility to find the answers to several important questions.

Every hand in the room went in the air when Dr. Justesen asked, “How many of you have had a measles shot?” After noting that every American has to get one before entering school, Justesen went on to say that the cost of a measles shot today is \$1.00. When he explained that 3,900 children under the age of eight worldwide would die from measles by the time his presentation was over, we were shocked, appalled and disgusted.

Throwing out more questions—Why does Oprah get so much money? Why does every country besides the U.S. begin their evening news with George Bush? Should the Library of Congress give out college-level books free?—Dr. Justesen continued to challenge the students’ minds.

Dr. Justesen also shared artificial intelligence statistics. In the year 2013, he explained, there will be a master computer that will exceed the knowledge of human beings. In 2023, that master computer will cost only \$1,000. It is said that our knowledge doubles every three years; however, in the year 2050, knowledge will double every 72 hours.

“For the first time in the history of the presidency, this presidential race actually reflects the American people” said Dr. Justesen. He left the students with the thought that if things are so complex, situations are so bad and we as civilians know the government makes the final decisions of society, then it is our responsibility to know our responsibility, and to become leaders so we can make sure this country prevails.

Dr. Troy Justesen gives keynote address to the Academy.



Accepting the Challenge

By ELVIA GONZALEZ
Michigan State University

As students hurriedly changed from business casual to running shoes and shorts, only the questions of PSLA participants could be heard. The agenda for Day 2 of PSLA '07 read, “Leadership Challenge Course.” As the students steadily marched up the hills of GWU’s Mount Vernon campus, the unspoken doubt among the them was nearly audible: “You are entering the ‘Land of the Tacky Ice-Breaker.’” Twenty minutes later, screams of excitement made their inhibitions quickly fade into adrenaline-pumped games of Tag and Simon Says.

Some of the activities involved imagination and some physical effort. Throughout the course, PSLA participants faced challenges vital to the empowerment and personal growth of leaders. The activities included standing on a log and figuring out each other’s birthdays without speaking. That challenge intensified when participants were instructed to stand in order of their birthday month, and weren’t allowed to step off the log in order to move. Lack of patience and communication took over as the group of students failed time and time again until an idea was presented and executed. And it worked!

The insurmountable challenge came when the students tried to get through the “Ring of Fire.” The purpose of that activity was to get through loopholes of different sizes without touching the strings. Everyone shared ideas and constructive opinions on how the challenge should be approached; however, they all spoke at the same time. There was no sense of organization or understandable communication between the students. Shyness overtook some of the students, pride was too much for others to swallow, and some students would not step down. Yet, the outcome of the experience was far better than expected: Wednesday was only the second day the PLSA participants had worked together, and by the end of the day, the job got done.



Teamwork on Life's Road

By LILIANA E. GUTIERREZ
Michigan State University

Taking a humorous approach, Linda and Mark Washington shared stories of their profession, their marriage and their lives. Linda Washington is Assistant Secretary for Administration in the Department of Transportation, and Mark Washington, a former National Football League player, is President of the Washington DC Chapter of the National Football League Retired Players Association. In addition to respecting each other, Mark and Linda respect each other's space and allow room for personal and career growth. After 37 years of marriage, they appear comfortable describing what has helped them succeed.

For Mrs. Washington, success came by developing people skills, and through adequate planning, sacrifice and perseverance. "For your goals, for your life, you have to have strategic plans," she said. Her work in helping evacuate people during 9-11 reinforced her strategic planning skills.

Just as she has applied planning throughout her career, her husband has applied it during game time. Mark Washington described goals and the need for them to be "...reasonable, measurable, timely." The Washingtons connected the need for goals and planning in the workplace to those needed as a member of a team. Mr. Washington explained: "First of all, you need to play as an individual and then you can play as a team. Some players have trouble when they try to play two parts at once." Excellence in playing as an individual is crucial to the team's performance, he continued, noting that in a team, cohesiveness is essential as well as adequate preparation and trust in one another.

The Washingtons agree that another component of teamwork is perseverance. They both exemplify that: Mr. Washington's Dallas Cowboys team persevered by practicing and analyzing until they mastered the play. Mrs. Washington persevered to acquire her job at the Library of Congress, where she was hired *two years* after her she first applied!



The Washingtons share thoughts on teamwork.

Effective Communication: More Than Just Words

By CAMILLIA R. COMEAUX
University of Missouri–Columbia

Timothy Howell, Director of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity Business Practices within Tyson Foods, Inc., posed the question "Who are you?" to the '07 PSLA class. It was the start of his discussion on Effective Communication Strategies.



Tim Howell presents communications strategies.

First, Howell showed an onion-shaped graphic that outlines what he calls the Primary, Secondary and Organizational diversity layers, which describe a person's self-perception as well as that of others—everything from demographics to the conceptualized person. "Who you are determines your communication," said Howell, noting that many values, ideas, beliefs and appearances communicate non-verbal messages.

Howell then guided the students in developing effective communication strategies through story, setback, system and strategy. These four areas represent the premise, problem, process and plan to overcome ineffective communication among individuals and groups. Next, Howell demonstrated these concepts through practical exercises with the students. In one on Improvisational Persuasive Speaking, Howell assigned controversial topics to teams of students. A representative from each team had two minutes in which to present their team's stance. The result was some very heated discussions.

Howell ended his session with the PSLA students by sharing his trademarked philosophy and quote, which pertain not only to the objective of the day, but also to each student's professional objective. His 5 R's of Communication™ are: Right Message, Right Audience, Right Time, Right Medium and Right Metrics. It's a reminder to the students that "...communication is a shared meaning or understanding between the sender and the receiver" and effectively doing so requires these five things.

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Siemens on Ethics in the Workplace

By BEN STROLE
2007 PSLA Team Leader

“Do the right thing” could well have been the title of a superb presentation by Jeniffer Harper-Taylor, Vice President, Siemens Foundation, on Saturday, 9 June.

Her guidance to the 2007 class was simple and to the point: “Don’t let anyone outwork you! Companies expect employees to follow the rules and do the right things,” she said. “As a leader, you must have a working knowledge of policies, codes and procedures.”

Accompanied by colleagues Terrie Allen of LexMark and Quintus Brown of Dell, Harper-Taylor led a lively panel discussion on ethics in the workplace.

Referencing the ethical issues of Enron, Tyco and WorldCom, the panel presented a series of “situational vignettes.” Brown posed a hypothetical question: “Are you willing to compromise your values for a short-term promotion?”

Sharing her experience as an engineer for three different Fortune 500 companies, Allen encouraged the class to “follow your moral compass; ethical behavior is part of being a leader.”

Using the Siemens business model, Harper-Taylor gave an excellent overview of key issues, including ethics law and the do’s and don’ts of contracting. “When in doubt, ask the human resource department for assistance” she said.

The panel’s message challenged our thinking and reinforced the leadership guidance of previous speakers. In closing the session, Harper-Taylor reminded the class that “corporate America continues to look for young, smart and hardworking leaders. Prepare yourself and don’t let anyone outwork you!”

Respecting your ELDRs

By ANGEL MCKNIGHT
Johnson C. Smith University

We’ve all heard it as a child: “Chew with your mouth closed.” It’s just one of many rules of etiquette that take on added importance at the business dinner table with colleagues or a potential employer. Fortunately, the PSLA class of 2007 had the opportunity to attend an informal business etiquette dinner, where they learned protocol from host Quintess Brown, Dell Corporation.

“Eat Left and Drink Right—ELDR,” said Brown, noting that respecting your ELDRs is just a one of the basic principles of business dining etiquette. It’s imperative that you don’t embarrass yourself in business and social situations, Brown said, as he demonstrated utensil placement and “good manners.”

The students got experience in eating and socializing in a professional setting at this “practice” business dinner. They learned that while dining, one should always be courteous to others at the table. “It’s not about the food, it’s about you,” said Brown.

He also advised the interns to arrive 10 or 15 minutes early. That way, they have time to properly introduce themselves and network before the dinner begins.

Brown also noted the importance of using proper English as opposed to slang or Ebonics. “Your first impression will always leave a lasting impression,” he said. His message was clear: Without practicing proper etiquette, you might not get a second chance to make a good impression.



Dealing With Peer Pressure

By STEVEN COUCH
Michigan State University



Andre
Rogers, CFO,
Enlightened,
Inc.

Think servers, parking, National Security, backup, clearances, planning, contracts, family—words that together personify the “it” factor behind the IT consulting company Enlightened, Inc. On meeting the PSLA students, Enlightened President Antwayne Ford quickly captured the attention of these future professionals. Earlier, the group had heard from his colleague Andre Rogers, Enlightened CFO, about the power of passion, and people as the conduit to purpose.

Passion continued to dominate, as Ford opened what would become a heated discussion. “Peer pressure can be positive or negative,” he said. Students shared their experiences of peer pressure, and defined what factors most influence it.

In college, said Ford, students are often faced with an array of choices—and friends who sometimes use their relationships to influence those choices. Peer pressure may come from male-to-male, female-to-male or female-to-female interaction, but it’s the obligation of the individual to hold true to their own morals and beliefs. Bad choices made during college can morph into indelible marks that follow students into adulthood and surface in background checks.

As the passion-filled discussion came to a close, the students rose to applaud this talented facilitator. Ford and Rogers left the group with some words of wisdom: “The more you realize who you are, the harder peer pressure has to work. In the end, tough times don’t last, but tough people do.”