TAKING THE LEAD

By Stephanie S. Marshall

During your college career, you may seek employment or apply for a scholarship and be asked about your leadership experience. Some questions may be: What organizations have you joined? What kind of projects have you worked on? Were you chair of a committee? The workplace can be very competitive and leadership skills can make you stand out. What does leadership mean to you? Leadership is taking charge and providing guidance. Good leaders possess the following:

- Strong communication skills
- The temperament of a team player
- The ability to create their own vision
- A desire to serve

Communication is essential for leadership: you must be able to speak, write and listen effectively. A leader should be able to work with diverse groups. Working in a team setting can foster relationships and help you advance to the next level in your job or career. Before you take the lead, create your own forward-looking vision for those working with you. The best leaders inspire us to follow them and become better versions of ourselves. A leader should be ready to face new challenges and be willing to provide service to others. To improve your communication skills, consider the following:

- Taking classes in public speaking (e.g. COMM 20)
- Participating in leadership workshops
- Joining a club or organization, on and off campus
- Running for office in an organization (e.g. student government)
- Volunteering your services

Volunteering Opportunities

Volunteer opportunities are everywhere. If you like animals you can volunteer at an animal shelter. If you enjoy nature you volunteer at a park. If you like to read you can volunteer at a library. You can contribute your time and energy to a hospital, church, school or summer camp. Consider volunteering during the holidays distributing toys to children or feeding the hungry. You can travel abroad for such organizations as Habitat for Humanity, Projects Abroad or the American Red Cross. You can search for volunteer opportunities online at sites like newyorkcares.org or volunteermatch.org.

Leadership is an important tool for college students. The ability to lead is augmented through coursework, attending debates, listening to speeches and reading books about leadership. Making the world a better place will require better leaders. Now is the time. Let’s get started!