

## Congratulations Graduating Seniors!



### Maria Ustavalkova

**Hometown:** Winona, MN

**Major:** B.S. Business Administration, Minors in Psychology and Literature

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Graduate studies at IIT in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in order to become a consultant in the human resources field to better the current hiring system as well as aid immigrants in continuing their careers here in the United States.

**LA Takeaways:** "Leadership Academy has helped me learn that there is no one leadership style that is the best. Everyone has their own way of leading and the best leaders are able to understand that, understand their audience and adapt to it in order to be successful."

**Advice:** "My biggest piece of advice is to get involved and do what you love. If you love what you do, you will only flourish and naturally step up into a leadership position. If you want something to change, be the catalyst for that change."

### Tristan Larson

**Hometown:** Moorhead, MN

**Major:** B.S. Computer Science, Minor in Psychology

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Going to Tanzania for 27 months to teach secondary school mathematics with the Peace Corps.

**LA Takeaways:** "Leadership Academy has given me a lot, but my most treasured experiences have been the opportunities to get to know fellow students at IIT. The Sophomore Leadership Retreat, Fresh In The Ciity, and other scheduled events get students to interact on a level that goes beyond the classroom, and I have forged lifelong friendships through these experiences. I am above all grateful for the opportunities and experiences the Leadership academy has provided me. It has opened countless doors and has been a defining part of my undergraduate career."

**Advice:** "Jump in with both feet; IIT is what you make of it, and there are plenty of opportunities to try something new. An adventurous spirit will take you far."



### Emmanuel Klu

**Hometown:** Cape Coast, Ghana

**Major:** B.S. Computer Science, Minor in Psychology

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Travelling all over Europe, then moving to the Bay Area to start a new job at Google as a Software Engineer.

**LA Takeaways:** "Fulfilling commitments and giving back to the community have probably been the biggest things I have learned; also being comfortable as a leader in your own personality."

**Advice:** "Be involved, open to experience, and hone your skills while in college. Know that it's the best avenue to make mistakes, learn from them and grow. Finally, network as much as possible."





## Kelly Lohr

**Hometown:** Greeley, CO

**Major:** B.S. Materials Science and Engineering

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Starting her Master's in Industrial Design at Rhode Island School of Design.

**LA Takeaways:** "The realization that I am a leader. Before Leadership Academy I never realized what leadership really meant. When I went to the retreat, it made me realize that it is an actual skill that can be brought out in others."

**Advice:** "Figure out what makes you happy, and do it. If you have a passion for it, it will show and inspire others. That's what true leadership is about."

## Jenna Lennon-Dorn

**Hometown:** Chicago, IL

**Major:** B.S. Political Science, Minor in Pre-medical studies

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Applying to graduate school for Physician's Assisting and being a doula (professional labor support for women in labor).

**LA Takeaways:** "I gained so many friends and a deep sense of the importance of being positive and kind with every person I encounter."

**Advice:** "Get involved in as many different activities as you have time for, try everything so you can learn about yourself!"



## Romit Girdhar

**Hometown:** Mumbai, India

**Major:** B.S. Computer Science and B.S. Applied Mathematics

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Working at Microsoft as an Associate Consultant.

**LA Takeaways:** "Being a part of Leadership Academy definitely helped me gain a lot more confidence that I had before. Something more that I've enjoyed... is the friendship and the help that I received from everyone else [in the academy]. I've also become a lot more organized than I was before."

**Advice:** "The best advice I can give freshmen is: 'Learn from experience and learn from others. Lead by example and always welcome feedback.'"

## Jeff Bednarz

**Hometown:** Des Plaines, IL

**Major:** B.S. Mechanical Engineering, Minor in History

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Travelling for a bit, then starting work at my father's HVAC company in the northwest suburbs; will eventually be transitioned to someday run the company.

**LA Takeaways:** "This many sound cheesy but anything is possible. After listening to many of the speakers' stories, it proves that through hard work you can rise to the top."

**Advice:** "It is very easy to affect change and do things at IIT. The system is set up so any one student can create an organization or effectively run an event. Also, take advantage of the different people here. IIT is very diverse which allows you to interact with students from all around the world... Have fun! Schooling at IIT may be tough but you have to make sure you make time to do the things you love."



## David Thor Biedrzycki



**Hometown:** Willowbrook, IL

**Major:** B.S. Computer Science, Minor in Entrepreneurship

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Travelling around Europe, and then working at kCura, a software company located downtown; will also be working on the side with MonkeyBars, a new startup created here at IIT focused on creating a better developer community.

**LA Takeaways:** "Faith in others and understanding. Many times, as a leader, I feel that I am the only one... pushing for something more. Getting to meet so many motivated and driven people has shown me that that is definitely not the case. Having the opportunity to meet so many great leaders has frequently driven me to continue pursuing the seemingly unachievable."

**Advice:** "My greatest advice would be to find what you love and pursue it... My second piece of advice is to be adventurous: always seek new opportunities and never shoot one down. You never know what that opportunity can bring to you."

## Matt Otten

**Hometown:** Granite City, IL

**Major:** B.S. Physics, Minor in Philosophy and Sociology of Science

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Attending graduate school at Cornell to begin Ph.D. in physics, specifically condensed matter theory.

**LA Takeaways:** "The most important part of my experience as a leadership academy scholar was meeting an incredibly diverse group of wonderful people. The plurality of views encountered is an incredible part of the experience as a scholar."

**Advice:** "Do not miss the experiences around you. As leaders, we sometimes focus on the future; what grad school, what job, what internship, and what can I do to get those, how to make my resume better. This focus on the future is nice, but the present might be better. While an undergraduate university is not just an academic institution, it is also a place to make strong, life-long friendships."



## Jacqueline Roche



**Hometown:** Chicago, IL

**Major:** B.S. Psychology and B.S. Humanities

**Post-Graduation Plans:** Continuing on as a Master's student in the Rehabilitation Counseling program at IIT.

**LA Takeaways:** "The impact that a stranger can have. Al self, R.I.P., the founder and benefactor of the Academy changed the lives and improved the situations of so many, including myself. My takeaways? Everything and everyone. I could write a novel about everyone I have met. That we are a walking, breathing testament to one man's dream that became a part of our own story – a massive step forward on the path to our own dreams. I hope to be able to pass on all that I have learned and earned in a similar fashion."

**Advice:** "Don't be afraid to give up who you are for who you could be. Also, take a quick Google glance into Level 5 leadership. I wish I had learned about it sooner."

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# Leadership *Ledger*

## Building Emotional Leaders

On Saturday March 30<sup>th</sup> the Leadership Academy scholars and guests met in the Armour Dining Hall to hear a presentation on leveraging emotional intelligence to enhance interpersonal relationships. Around 50 eager leaders came together to hear our very own George Langlois and Megan Wheeler speak about emotional intelligence (EQ).

To begin, Langlois stated our learning objectives: to understand and recognize EQ, understand how to leverage EQ in relationships and define a personal EQ development plan. So, you may be asking right now what is EQ. It is the ability to understand and act on the information emotions provide. In order to EQ competent you have to first regulate your impulses, empathize towards others and be resilient when facing obstacles.

The first activity had participants reflexing on a person they felt had good EQ and what traits they have. On the flip side, we also had to identify bad EQ traits. After collaborating at our tables we came together as a group and created a solid list of traits. This transitioned into George describing the first part of EQ, perceiving emotions, and the groups breaking into another activity.

Each participant had to rate themselves from 1 to 5 (1=rarely and 5=most of the time) in the following categories: self-awareness, self-regulation, emotional self-control, flexibility, empathy, energy and social skills. Again the whole seminar came together and described the obstacles of developing these traits and how they can be developed.

Next, George introduced the second part of EQ: acting on emotions. Once again participants and the large group rated themselves and then discussed. They rated themselves on the same scale but in the following categories: motivation, achievement, resilience, stress management, tolerance, persuasiveness and the ability to lead. After all the self-reflection and group discussions, the participants had a solid understand of what EQ meant.

Now Wheeler took the reins of the seminar and we dove deeper into emotions. Emotions can provide helpful information and if dealt with correctly can help us lead effectively. The last activity had each participant think of two specific times, one when they had good feelings and the other when they had bad ones. They then choose from a list of emotions and adjectives. It was then discussed how our emotions helped or hurt us lead effectively.

To conclude, Wheeler asked each participant to make a SMART goal focusing on an EQ trait they would like to improve. These goals were shared and corrected within each group. After everyone was filled with EQ knowledge they were dismissed to take the traits they had learned into the real world.

## Leading People through Change

On February 16<sup>th</sup> the Leadership Academy hosted a seminar focusing on leading people through a change. The seminar took place in the MTCC ballroom and was led by Dorie Ellzey Blessoff. Blessoff is an organizational consultant, executive coach, retreat facilitator and Northwestern University faculty member. She has been in the field for many years and came into the seminar hoping to help the students deal with great transitions in their lives.

A few days before the seminar date, 10 scholars met with Blessoff. They were charged with the task of facilitating the table discussions. Throughout the seminar they worked diligently at tables asking the right questions and ensuring the transitions between topics were flawless.

The seminar began with an exercise. During the exercise, 8 members of the crowd were asked to step out of the room where Blessoff addressed them. She told them they were supposed to pretend to be managers of a company. They had to convince their workers, the rest of the students, that by drinking a certain drink they could increase their productivity. The managers were given limited information and made their pitch. At the end of the exercise, Blessoff asked the students what their level of commitment was when drinking or not drinking the mystery drink.

Blessoff used the exercise to dive into her first points She described the difference between a change and transitional management. Change management starts with the outcome where transitional management starts wherever the people are. Then Blessoff described the different stages of a transition: ending, natural and beginning.

Endings are associated with a variety of emotions. Some people are scared about losing something while others are excited. As a leader, we should acknowledge the loss, sell the problem first as opposed to the solution and honor the past. This will help our followers deal with this critical stage.

During the neutral stage, people are confused and in limbo. They really do not know what is going to happen and productivity often decreases. It is important to be open during this stage. Set up opportunities for your followers to ask questions and if you do not know them be honest. Steer your followers into thinking this is a change to innovate and implement changes to the "new" model.

Lastly, during the new beginning stage comfort increases and people have a task they can focus on. They are charged with the task of seeing how they fit into the new model. Leaders should provide the 4 P's during this stage: purpose, picture, plan and a part. This will help people buy into the new model and truly understand their role.

To conclude the seminar, Blessoff had each student fill out a worksheet about a transition they are in. They had to define what stage they were at and what leadership skills would be helpful to their followers. The seminar ended with people sharing and discussing their changes.

## Boeing Dinner

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, we had the pleasure of enjoying light appetizers with Dr. John Tracy, the Chief Technology Officer and senior vice president of Engineering, Operations and Technology at The Boeing Company. Dr. Tracy shared his incredibly inspiring story of how he started as a high school physics teacher and eventually transitioned to his current position at Boeing. He shared about his initial struggles to find and keep a job, and how his persistence eventually paid off. As he shared his personal story, it became clear why Dr. Tracy eventually wound up to where he is today: he is an incredibly intelligent man with a curious mind, compassion, and the ability to go above and beyond what is expected of him. He spoke about Stephen Covey's The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, and explained how the lessons he learned from this book have helped him get to where he is today. I think all who attended the reception would agree that Dr. Tracy is a testament to the power of perseverance, and we all appreciated that he took time out of his busy schedule to spend time with us.



## Executives' Club Programs

Over the course of the semester, scholars had the opportunity to attend various programs sponsored by The Executives' Club of Chicago. At each program, there is a featured guest that speaks on a specific topic. Attending these programs gave scholars the opportunity to hear various company CEO's, President's, etc. speak about their journey and network with other companies in attendance.



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## Jefferson Youth Service Day

Chicago Youth Service Day (CYSD) is an annual opportunity for young people across Chicago to join together for a day of service. The event will be on May 4<sup>th</sup> and will conclude in Morton Park. Morton Park will play host to team building activities and a peace rally. Hopefully this year the event will draw people like Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

The Leadership Academy has been working with Elizabeth Wackerlin, the programmer for CYSD, for some time now. For CYSD she has three scholars helping bring in IIT support. The scholars have been working diligently to gain volunteers from the IIT community. Seeing the event is the weekend before finals, it is a difficult task. However, they will push on hopefully making the event a fun and successful time.