Welcome to the Presidential Leadership Academy Alumni Newsletter!

Hello, Beta Class, and welcome to the ranks of PLA Alumni!

“Alumni” is a word with a lot of baggage. Speaking it invokes a sense of accomplishment, coupled with a fondness and pride for that place you spent 4+ years of your life. After you say the word “Alumni,” notes of nostalgia linger, because the very fact that you’re using the word means you’re not a student anymore, and being an undergraduate student at Penn State—especially a student in the PLA—was a remarkable experience. As someone who can no longer say “I graduated in May” without adding “2012” to the end of that statement, I can tell you that identifying myself as an “Alum” still feels a little strange one year out.

Back in Happy Valley, the 2013-2014 school year is just beginning. A new class of PLA students fills the seats in C-9 Atherton, excited for eye-opening lectures and opportunities, but unable to fully grasp, yet, what the next three years have in store.

Here’s to the future—for the current PLA class, and for all of us. We’ve moved on to new seats—in new classrooms, or office buildings, or wherever we may find ourselves—but the promise of a remarkable future remains the same.

Features:
(Hint: Click each section title to be taken directly to that page)

Alumni Pulse
PLA Alumni are cordially invited back to campus for an Alumni Tailgate this fall!

PLA Update
Melissa and Lisa fill us in on the recent adventures and achievements of current PLA students, including a new class!

Grey Matter
I’m sure we can all agree that one of the biggest adjustments to post-PLA life has been the lack of classes on Sunday evenings. But, not to worry, we’ve included some reading material to rev up your critical thinking.

Catching Up
In this issue, get caught up with Harry Anderson, Sara Chroman, Eli Glazier, Eboni Hatchell and Katrina Kumpf. Stay tuned for our next issue, when we catch up with some of our newest Alumni!
September 21: PLA Alumni Tailgate
On September 21, Penn State will take on Kent State in the third home game of the season. Where will you be? Hopefully in Happy Valley, at the PLA Alumni tailgate! The event will take place at **12:30pm in Lubrano Park**. PLA is partnering with the SHC Alumni Association for this event, and word has it that the Hintzes may make an appearance to get caught up on everyone’s summers.

Please RSVP to Allison Siebenmann (ams78@psu.edu) by September 20 if you plan to attend.
To read the bios of the newest PLA students, visit:

**PLA Orientation**
Orientation took place at Shaver’s Creek this year. As you can see from the photos below, a variety of hands-on activities had students working together and getting acquainted with one another.

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**2013-2014 PLA Trip Locations**

This year, the PLA will visit Philadelphia (Fall) and Washington DC (Spring). Stay tuned for details of the trips, and how Alumni can get involved!
In April 2013, six PLA policy presentations focused on a variety of topics:

**Demand More: Penn State Administrative Representation** examines the structure and operations of the Penn State Board of Trustees, and recommends improvements. Read it here.

**Balancing the Operating Budget: Creating a Healthier Penn State and Expanding World Campus** examines Penn State’s operating budget, and offers suggestions to cut costs and increase revenue to ease the financial burden on students, while simultaneously maintaining benefits to faculty and staff. Read it here.

**Cultivating Communication** draws on eight interviews with leaders, stakeholders, and communications experts in the Penn State community to recommend new policies for improved internal and external communications. Read it here.

**Diversity at Penn State** assesses Penn State’s diversity practices to date—focusing on recruitment, Latino students, international students, and diversity education—and offers suggestions to improve what is already a positive track record. Read it here.

**Five and Ten-Year Strategies for the Future of Penn State: Increasing Undergraduate Research Engagement** focuses on the value of undergraduate research opportunities available at Penn State, and offers suggestions to increase student participation. Read it here.
What are you up to?
I was recently transferred back to Frederick, MD for work after spending 5 ½ months in the Mojave desert in California. The company that I work for builds large-scale power plants, and my role is to procure materials for the renewable energy projects. Basically, I reach out to manufacturers and get them to compete for contracts to supply materials that we will use to build solar PV plants and wind turbine plants.

I am living in Arlington, VA with one of my good friends from Penn State.

What have you been reading? Watching? Listening to? Any recommendations?
Bonhoeffer, by Eric Metaxas, is the biography of a man who gave his life in defiance of the Nazi party in Germany. He is one of the most prominent Christian theologians of the 20th century, and was executed by the Nazis just 3 weeks before the Soviet Capture of Berlin, for his role in the German resistance movement.

What are you looking forward to in the next 6 months?
Some friends of mine from State and I are going to hike a (small) portion of the Appalachian Trail this summer through Grayson Highlands in Virginia. I can't wait.

Have you been back to PSU recently?
I was back for THON and had an incredible time. I got to spend a lot of time on the floor with one of my best friends who danced.

Tell us about a project at work that you’re excited about
At work, we are getting into Offshore Wind Farms; those gigantic windmills that stick out 400ft from the middle of the ocean. I am hoping to get to climb out on one once we start building them.

Tell us about something fun you did recently in your new home
I've barely been here long enough to have done anything really interesting, but I did get my motorcycle license recently and will hopefully be putting it to good use soon.

What are some things that you would recommend people do if they’re ever in Maryland?
Northside Social in Arlington is a cool spot to check out. I hung out there back in October with Gary and Meg when I didn't even know I'd be moving here. When the weather gets warmer, I want to go kayaking on the Potomac.

**Share a couple of random facts with us!**

When my friend and I road-tripped back from California we stopped in at the Big Texan in Amarillo and ordered the Rocky Mountain Oysters. As the menu says: "if you think it's seafood, stick to the shrimp."

What has been the toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduating from PSU?

Losing the feeling of freedom to pursue my dreams. I believe that the freedom remains there, but now there are other expectations and other competing aspirations that have entered the scene. I have a dream to fix up a sailboat and sail to Australia, but now I'm also in a course that promises advancement in a career that at least right now I enjoy - so I wonder whether I will ever get in the boat. I used to think that only bad things could curb my aspirations, but I am learning that enjoyable things can accomplish the same, and that I need to strongly consider what my priorities should be.
What are you up to?
Currently, I am working as a Human Capital Analyst for Deloitte Consulting. I work specifically within our Organization Transformation practice and have found that I have a keen interest in organizational strategies and change management, specifically within the Financial Services sector. My current project is based out of St. Louis, Missouri where I am working with a health care provider on a change management team as the company rolls out a time-capturing system to their entire organization (over 20,000 employees!). Needless to say, it’s chaotic, ever-changing, challenging…and right up my alley!

Where do I live? Well, this is the million dollar question! I would say that I actually don’t officially “live” anywhere- perhaps an airport or maybe just call me a nomad with a large carry-on? Each week, I leave a location I called “home” for the weekend and fly to St. Louis, returning “home” each Thursday. Over the past few weeks, I have been to 9 different states visiting friends and family. Maybe I’m a couch surfer? If you’re ever in an airport—text me— I’m probably nearby! Fun fact: I no longer have a permanent address. Thank goodness for online bill pay!

What have you been reading? Watching? Listening to? Any recommendations?
**Books:** Gone Girl, Unorthodox, and Lean In (as a woman in business, Lean In is a must)
**TV Shows:** Shameless and House of Lies (For those interested, House of Lies is NOT an accurate portrayal of consulting, but hysterical none the less!)
**Radio:** Recently I have been very into the “Story Corps” series on NPR. They are short, 3-5 minute videos, and I listen to them each morning before getting into the office.

What are you looking forward to in the next 6 months?
In July, my family and I will be traveling to Maine for a family biking vacation! We will bike 60-100 miles each day through Maine and stay in lodges throughout the state. We are all so excited! In August, my mom and I will be running our 7th half marathon together in Nashville, TN! Finally, in September, I will be participating in my very first triathlon with some colleagues in Washington, DC. It’s now time to get my swimming up to par!

Have you been back to PSU recently?
I was back at the beginning of February for the Smeal Career Fair to help with Deloitte recruiting efforts. I loved being back on campus, it always feel like home to me. I was able to stay the weekend and watch the Penn State Women’s Ice Hockey team play a series of home games. It was so great to see “my girls” again and I was able to take out some of my former teammates and “newbies” for dinner! It was wonderful to see my teammates mentoring the newest members of the team and although I miss them all terribly, I am so proud of their accomplishments.
Tell us about a project at work that you’re excited about

I recently organized a “Speed Networking” event for Analysts in my office! It was an opportunity for young professionals to network and building relationships with Senior Management. The event was set up like a “Speed Dating” event, where each analyst and Senior Management team member have about 2 minutes to learn about one another. I received wonderful feedback from all who attended the event and it will now become a tradition!

Tell us about something fun you did recently in your new home

Well, this is quite the difficult question. Since I lack a permanent location, I am going to choose three things to do in the past three cities I’ve been in!

What are 3-5 things that you would recommend people do in your new home if they are ever in the area?

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**St. Louis, MO**

If you’re in St. Louis you have to see Gateway Arch! My project team and I went to the top of the arch a few weeks back and the view is breathtaking. If your claustrophobic, beware of the small pods you use to get up to the top- SO SMALL! Nonetheless, the breathtaking view is worth the trip up!

**Atlanta, GA**

Piedmont Park in Atlanta is an amazing outdoor park with great running, biking, and rollerblading paths. Fun fact- it’s the same size as NYC’s Central Park! When I was there a few weeks back, it was 75 degrees and sunny—my friends and I spent the entire day outside!

**Madison, WI**

I know, I know- Linds already covered Madison and while of course of paths didn’t cross while I was there, the city was just as great as Lindsay described. As I arrived on a Friday, I had to find a quiet spot to get some work done during the day and someone suggested the University of Wisconsin library. While it was not Patemo library, it was wonderful! It’s funny, I had not been back in a college library since Penn State, and I felt right at home. All in all, University of Wisconsin has a breathtaking campus and Madison is a great city- I really enjoyed my time there! If you’re there, I recommend ‘Old Fashioned’ for dinner- with a view of the capital it can’t be beat!
Share a couple of random facts with us!
As many of you know, fitness is a passion of mine. Beginning in August, I started doing Crossfit and I’m beyond obsessed. Crossfit is quite difficult to describe, and I usually just tell people that it’s a different way to work out- box jumps, rope climbs, pull-ups. You name it- we do it! I recently started competing in the Crossfit open to challenge myself and hope to improve over the next few months.

Aside from work and Crossfit, I have been traveling a lot as well. This past weekend I was in Madison, Wisconsin and will be in Boston, Massachusetts this upcoming weekend. One of my most favorite things to do is go for a nice long run in each city that I visit. I think it helps me to get acquainted with the city in a different way.

What has been the toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduating from PSU?
I have never been a great “transition-er,” regardless of the situation. I think one of the most difficult things about post- PSU life was that my support system was scattered. I couldn’t remember the last time I had to “make friends” and it’s much harder at 22 than in Kindergarten, let me tell you! Additionally, with the intense travel and lack of stability, it has been difficult for me to develop a routine like I had at PSU.
What are you up to?

Right now, I'm enrolled in a Master of Planning two-year program at the University of Southern California. Specifically, I'm studying how we can make urban environments more walkable, vital places by improving urban design, putting in place catalytic zoning and land use regulations, and making sure streets are equally accessible to those on bikes, foot, and cars alike.

I'm living in a pretty nice sized loft in downtown Los Angeles with one of my friends from my planning program. I don't have a car, and living downtown I can bike, walk, and take public transit anywhere I need to go. Door to door, I can be on campus riding my bike in about 15 minutes.

What have you been reading? Watching? Listening to? Any recommendations?

Most of my reading time recently has been largely spent on urban planning books and journal articles. One book I just finished reading that I found really interesting is called Made for Walking: Density and Neighborhood Form, by Julie Campoli. Another is Walkable City, by Jeff Speck. Another really cool one is called Human Transit, by Jarrett Walker.

I have managed to read some fiction. I'm slowly getting through re-reading The Three Musketeers, which I recommend. Also, I'm saddened by the death of Chinua Achebe, and if you haven't, I highly suggest reading Things Fall Apart.

On the music front, I've been listening to a bunch of different stuff lately, including The Babies, The Allah-Las, Robert Glasper, Autre Ne Veut, the new Foals album, Curtis Mayfield, Thee Oh Sees, aarabMUZIK, Parquet Courts, Gothic Tropic, and the new Youth Lagoon album. I'm seeing The National and Dirty Projectors at Merriweather Post Pavilion this summer, and I'm very excited about that.

We don't have TV at my apartment, but I've been watching some shows when I have time. I just finished watching HBO’s Girls last week. I'm excited for Veep to come back. I'm sad
Rock is over for good. Community has been okay this season, and I have yet to watch House of Cards, but all my friends who have seen it really liked it.

What are you looking forward to in the next 6 months?
I'm looking for a planning internship in Washington, D.C. this summer, and I'm really looking forward to spending the next few months on the East Coast.

Have you been back to PSU recently?
I haven't! I really want to go back for Arts Fest, and I'll be disappointed if that doesn't work out.

Tell us about a project at school that you're excited about.
In addition to school, I'm interning with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation Bicycle Program, and we're working on rolling out a citywide system of bike route way finding, which will help cyclists get to hundreds of destinations around the city on the most bike-safe routes. I'm looking forward to that project being done, and to see it benefit city cyclists.

Tell us about something fun you did recently in your new home
One of the coolest things I've done in LA is have a bonfire at Dockweiler State Beach. I first did this in the fall, and we're actually having another one March 29th. Dockweiler is one of the few places in LA County where you can have a fire on the beach. Everyone gets together with food, fire, and the surf crashing as the sun sets. It's a very awesome experience made even better by the fact that the beach is under the flightpath of one of LAX's runways, so you can see planes taking off a few hundred feet above you.

What are 3-5 things that you would recommend people do in LA if they are ever in the area?
1) Get a taco from a food truck and try Korean barbecue. If any of you follow me on Instagram, you've no doubt seen that I'm experiencing Los Angeles largely through my mouth. I don't think you can get the full LA experience if you don't do the same.
2) Go hiking in the Santa Monica Mountains and hang out at Point Dume in Malibu. There are beautiful views, and you can get an idea about the sheer physical beauty of Southern California.
3) Take the metro. Yes it exists! LA has developed a reputation as a place where you need a car to get around. While this is true in places, the rail and bus network is actually incredibly extensive and can get you where you need to go quickly and with relative ease.
4) Walk around downtown LA. It's experiencing a renaissance right now, and the pre-war architecture is beautiful. It's often used for movie, television, or commercial film shoots to stand in for other cities in the US. It's surprising now how many times I see LA in commercials I watch on tv. That's not to say you'll see celebrities, but the buildings are worth the trip.

Share a couple of random facts with us!
Other than wearing shorts in February, I don't have much to report. I'm still basically the same snarky, outgoing person.
What has been the toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduating from PSU?

Saint's Cafe. Other places don't have Saint's Cafe. I kid, but only a little bit. You develop habits and you get comfortable in college. When you graduate, all of that is uprooted and you need to start from the beginning somewhere else. I'd like to echo Meg from February in saying that post-graduate life is a lot about making the initially uncomfortable comfortable. You move to a new city. You meet new people who become friends. And, yes, you find a new coffee shop. Almost nowhere you live after college will be as cozy as Penn State, but in time, you make it your own and become at home.
What are you up to?
I am lucky enough to still be at Penn State pursuing my Masters in Energy Management and Policy, and am living right downtown above Starbucks. I graduated with a BS degree in Materials Science and Engineering, so I figured taking my background in that and combining it will energy policy will really allow me to break into the field of helping companies design energy efficient buildings and LEED certification.

What have you been reading? Watching? Listening to? Any recommendations?
I read constantly, so it might be hard to list everything haha. Just recently reread The Thirteen Tale and would highly recommend it.
As for TV shows, anything funny to break up the studying is a welcome. In particular, I’m a fan of Psych, New Girl, How I Met Your Mother, and Parks and Recreation.

What are you looking forward to in the next 6 months?
The next few months are just going to be research, research, and more research. I am looking forward to summer though - I have never stayed in State College during the summer.

Have you been back to PSU recently?
For me, I'm always here! I love everything about this town (in particular the football games in the fall).

Tell us about a project that you’re excited about
I am starting to do work on my thesis research, which is very exciting. I am looking into solar technology, and how it can most effectively contribute to the electric grid. It’s all just starting to take shape, so who knows were it will take me in the end. But I have always had a great interest in solar technology, and am very excited to be doing research directly in that area.

Tell us about something fun you did recently in State College
Since I live in State College, and everyone knows the usual that goes on here, I'll mention spring break instead. This year I got to Houston, TX with my boyfriend and experience my very first rodeo. It was an experience for sure, and I instantly fell in love with the entire event. Even got myself a cowgirl hat!

Also, I went to Ottos for the first time this year, and would highly recommend it. They brew their own beer, and the food is delicious.

Share a couple of random facts with us!
Last summer as my graduation present I had a flying lesson! I went up in a tiny propeller plane, flew over my house, and even took the controls for a while. Definitely one of the coolest things I have ever done.

Katrina’s flying lesson

What has been the toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduating from PSU?

Graduate school here at PSU is the same and yet different. It’s the same campus and same familiar feel, but now I live in my apartment downtown and classes are much different. Grad students only take 9 credits (ha!), but the classes are more intense and I spend much more time on research and projects. So a weird and exciting mix of the old and the new. Penn State will always be home for me.
What are you up to?
I am currently working in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) as a fifth grade ESL, English Language Arts/Reading/Social Studies teacher. (Whew, that's a mouthful!) I live in a nice little apartment in Houston, near the Reliant Stadium. (Go Texans!)

What have you been reading? Watching? Listening to?
I've taken up some deadly vices as a teacher: I've subscribed to both Netflix and Hulu+, along with cable on demand because I can never watch things on the same day. While I don't typically watch TV, whenever I get an ounce of "free time" on the weekend it's quickly filled with Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives, Law & Order: SVU, Chopped, and Storage Wars.

As far as books, I read a lot of stuff now on pedagogy or children's literature. But Practice Perfect: 42 Rules of Getting Better at Getting Better reaches far beyond just teaching. It gives some insight into how to get things done, but get them done right because you've practiced them perfectly for so long.

What are you looking forward to in the next 6 months?
In the next six months, I'm looking forward to going back to visit my host family in Ecuador or Honduras. The summer seems like the most appropriate time, so I'm currently planning that for sometime mid-to-late July.

Have you been back to PSU recently?
I have not been back to PSU recently. Maybe in my dreams a few times, but alas, I haven’t set foot back in Happy Valley yet.

Tell us about a project at work that you’re excited about
A project at work that I’m excited about is a book study of Maniac Magee. So far this year, I’ve pulled an assortment of literature and reading materials for my students. However, there’s nothing like a class set of books and all delving into the same piece of work together. It’s a fascinating book chock full of literary elements. It’s not the most common practice in elementary school to do a group book study, but it will be an exciting time for us in the classroom.

Tell us about something fun you did recently in your new home
Houston Rodeo just left town! So I went to see the livestock show, cowboy/Texan merchandise, and eat a turkey leg and funnel cake. I didn’t ride the rides, but the carnival looked pretty cool, too. That was probably the most fun thing I’ve done in the city recently.
What are 3-5 things that you would recommend people do in Philadelphia if they are ever in the area?

1. Take a walking tour of the Museum District. There are not many places one can walk in Houston, but this area of town is so convenient to travel, walk and explore.

2. Check out Miller Outdoor Theatre. There is always some form of entertainment going on: jazz ensemble, dance festival, art show, etc.

3. Go to Discovery Green: a free outdoor arena that hosts a plethora of outdoor vendors, workout sessions, movies, and concerts. But it’s also right across from the George R. Brown Convention Center so it’s in a convenient location for when special attractions come to town. For example, we just had All-Star Weekend in Houston, and Miller contracted the space to host a bunch of All-Star related activities. Coupled with the restaurants that surround the location, it’s a go-to downtown hotspot.

Share a couple of random facts with us!

I’ve begun taking hot yoga classes on Wednesday with a friend. The first time it’s insanely hot (105-115 degrees F), but when you leave you feel so rejuvenated. Coming back after that is cake work. I think it’s one of those things where you just love it or you hate it. There is no in between.

What has been the toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduating from PSU?

The toughest thing to get used to about life post-graduation from PSU is being intentional about building and sustaining relationships. Even if most of your friends and colleagues lived off-campus or in another town completely, there was more time to invest in developing those relationships. As a working adult, I feel there’s so much more that pulls at your attention and so much that needs to be done, there just isn’t that liberty to be so free with time. So being deliberate in that manner has been the toughest.