

Sorensen Institute
for Political Leadership
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



POLITICAL
LEADERS

P R O G R A M

&

CANDIDATE
TRAINING

P R O G R A M

Sorensen Institute

OVERVIEW

The Sorensen Institute has established itself as a powerful and effective force for restoring public confidence in our political system.

The Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia was founded in 1993 to identify, educate, and train emerging leaders from throughout the Commonwealth. The founders were a group of public-spirited Virginians who were concerned that a growing cynicism about politics was keeping capable leaders from entering public life. They envisioned a political leadership program that would reach out to emerging leaders and provide them with the training necessary to succeed in politics and public service. The Sorensen Institute is a non-partisan organization dedicated to improving political leadership in Virginia thereby strengthening the quality of governance at all levels of government.

Through a variety of programs—for high school and college leaders to first-time political candidates and influential business and community leaders—the Sorensen Institute has established itself as a powerful and effective force for restoring public confidence in our political system.

At the heart of every Sorensen program are three central themes: ethics in public service, the power of bipartisanship, and a concentrated study of public policy issues. All Sorensen Institute programs provide an opportunity for leaders to develop meaningful relationships with Virginians of differing political viewpoints and from other areas of the state.

The Sorensen Institute has more than 1,000 graduates of its various programs. Sixteen alumni now serve in the Virginia General Assembly—two in the Senate and fourteen in the House. Dozens more have been appointed to boards and commissions, while nearly 100 have been elected to local office. Other alumni have served in the Governor's cabinet or as heads of state agencies, and many are serving in critical leadership positions in nonprofits, local governments or in the private sector.

In 2007 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized the Sorensen Institute's College and High School Leaders Programs as among the very best in the nation and a national model when it comes to giving young people the skills and motivation to become politically engaged in their communities.

The Sorensen Institute seeks participants from all political affiliations, socio-economic backgrounds, professions, and from throughout Virginia. Participants are selected through a competitive application process and without regard to their ability to pay tuition. Scholarships and tuition assistance are available.



POLITICAL LEADERS *Program*

The first class of Political Leaders graduated from the Sorensen Institute in the spring of 1994. The late State Senator Emily Couric was a member of that inaugural group. For its first two years, the program was held twice a month and graduated two classes each year. In 1996 the program was modified to its current schedule of holding class one weekend a month for ten months. In addition to its strong focus on ethics and bipartisanship, the Political Leaders Program has always been committed to making

sure students see as much of Virginia as possible. Throughout the program, each diverse class of participants has spent time in various locations across the Commonwealth—from Roanoke to Hampton Roads, Northern Virginia to Southside, Richmond to the Shenandoah Valley. The Sorensen Institute's Political Leaders Program has become a traditional first step for future political leaders in Virginia. In 2008 the Political Leaders Program marks its 15th year of classes.

CANDIDATE TRAINING *Program*

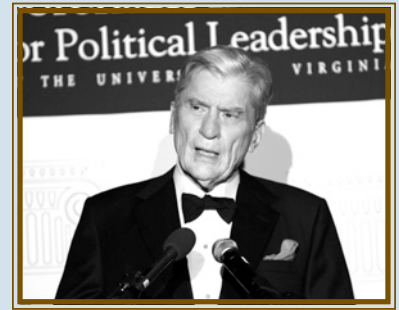
Thanks to a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Sorensen Institute went into development on a unique Candidate Training Program beginning in 1997. The guiding premise was to create a program that would teach new political candidates how to run and win an ethical, positive campaign. The first Candidate Training Program was held in Charlottesville in

1999. Since that time the program has proven to be incredibly successful. Nearly 60 CTP graduates have put what they have learned at Sorensen to work and have as a result won elected office at all levels of government across the Commonwealth. The Sorensen CTP has been the model for replication in Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio, Florida and elsewhere.

COLLEGE & HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS *Programs*

In keeping with its mission to educate, inspire, and train Virginia's future political and community leaders, the Sorensen Institute began offering two youth programs in 2004. Like all Sorensen programs, the High School and College Leaders Programs are

focused on ethics, bipartisanship, public policy, and civic engagement. The curricula are designed to provide young Virginians with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective leaders and advocates at the state and local levels of the political process.



"It makes no difference whether it's the library board or the General Assembly or coming to Congress, it's becoming more complex, more demanding, and more challenging. What you do by way of this early education will reap tremendous benefits in the years to come."

– U.S. Senator John Warner,
Honorary Chairman of the
Sorensen State Board

Political Leaders Program

OVERVIEW

The Sorensen Institute's flagship Political Leaders Program is a leadership development program for residents of Virginia interested in becoming more active in public service, whether as community leaders or as elected officials. Participation in this program has become a traditional first step for future political leaders in the Commonwealth. The class meets in various locations across Virginia, once a month for ten months from March through December.

One of the hallmarks of the program is the discussion with fellow participants who hail from all corners of Virginia and represent the full range of the

political spectrum. Participants develop a deep appreciation for how Virginians with different political affiliations or backgrounds, or from other parts of the state, think about and deal with challenging public policy issues.

More than 70 graduates of the Political Leaders Program have served in elected office around Virginia, including 12 in the House of Delegates and two in the Virginia Senate. Graduates of the program have served and continue to serve in the Governor's cabinet, as the heads of state agencies, on state and local boards and commissions and as leaders in their communities at all levels.



CURRICULUM

The PLP curriculum is focused on three core subject areas:

ETHICS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

The program includes a study of general ethical principles as they relate to public service. Participants are challenged to consider the ethical implications of political action and develop the ability to identify and handle ethical issues in the public arena. We also explore Virginia's conflict of interest laws and Freedom of Information Act. The practical application of bipartisan cooperation in politics, including the use of mediation techniques, is also a central theme throughout the program.

PUBLIC POLICY

Participants will enjoy presentations and discussions regarding a variety of public policy issues facing state and local governments—including but not limited to the state budget, transportation, education, healthcare, economic development, crime and public safety, and the environment. Program speakers include current and former elected officials, cabinet secretaries, business and non-profit leaders, and other experts in each field. Participants also have the opportunity to see public policy in action, through activities such as: discussing public safety at the State Police Academy or at a correctional facility; exploring agricultural policy through visits to farms; learning about our import-export economy while at the Port of Virginia; or seeing the role of industry in Virginia at some of our largest manufacturers.

CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY SKILLS

The program surveys the key elements of winning political and issue advocacy campaigns. Topics may include fundraising, lobbying, message development, crisis management, working with the media, and more.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Sorensen Institute seeks adult men and women of all ages from across Virginia who are actively involved in their communities and who desire to participate in the political process. Approximately 35 participants are selected each year in a highly competitive selection process that includes a detailed essay-based application and in-person interviews. One essential goal of the selection process is to ensure that the program participants reflect the demographic and geographic make up of the state. Each class has a balance between Republicans and Democrats, in addition to participants who have other party or no party affiliations. This composition is critical to the effectiveness of the program.

The Sorensen Institute has been exceptional at reaching across party lines, getting people to focus on the right types of problems, finding ways to reach solutions and common ground so that we can all come together to work for the Commonwealth and the United States."

— Sean Connaughton, Maritime Administrator for the U.S. Department of Transportation Political Leaders Program Class of 1995

APPLICATIONS

The application process is open to Virginia residents who are eligible to run for political office. A commitment to fully participate in the program is required.

TUITION

Acceptance to any Sorensen Institute program is need-blind and individuals are strongly encouraged to apply regardless of any financial concerns. Requests for financial aid or scholarships will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis once the selection process is completed. Participants are responsible for their own travel expenses to each weekend, but all other program expenses are covered by the tuition cost.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The Political Leaders Program runs for ten months each year, March through December. Classes meet one weekend a month and are held in different locations across the state. With few exceptions, a typical weekend schedule begins at 5:00 pm on Friday and ends by 3:00 pm on Saturday. Most weekends include an optional Friday lunch, tour, and speaker at which attendance is strongly encouraged.

WHO IS SORENSEN?

In 1997 the Institute was named for generous benefactor Thomas C. Sorensen shortly before he passed away. Tom Sorensen was a retired investment executive and a former Deputy Director of the U.S. Information Agency. Tom had a passionate belief in the mission of the organization. It was his wish that future generations of Virginians would always have the ability to take advantage of this unique opportunity. At the heart of Tom Sorensen's inspiring legacy is an enthusiastic commitment to principled leadership and public service. Tom passed away in November of 1997 at the age of 71. He was the older brother to Ted Sorensen, who served as advisor and speechwriter to President John F. Kennedy. Sorensen's legacy now includes the 17 people who have graduated from the Institute and gone on to serve in the General Assembly.



Candidate Training Program

OVERVIEW

The Sorensen Institute's Candidate Training Program is an intensive, four-day program focused on the fundamentals of running a winning campaign for office. Participants explore the nuts and bolts of building a strong campaign from the ground up—all within the context of ethics and principled campaigning.

The curriculum does not prescribe a particular set of campaign guidelines or rules. Instead, the program challenges candidates to consider the ethical implications of their campaign's conduct and provides them with a framework for developing their own code of conduct to

run a winning and ethical campaign. Participants in the program represent a broad range of ideologies and a diversity of communities from throughout Virginia. Graduates of the program have run for a variety of political offices including sheriff, city council, board of supervisors, State Senate and House of Delegates and Congress.

Nearly 60 alumni of the Candidate Training Program have won their campaigns and served in elected offices around the Commonwealth, including one in the Virginia State Senate and seven in the Virginia House of Delegates.



CURRICULUM

The Candidate Training Program is focused on giving participants the knowledge and practical skills they will need to build a winning campaign from the ground up. Over the course of the four days, participants will meet with some of the top political consultants in the state to learn the fundamentals of campaigning for office in Virginia. The program curriculum may include in-depth coverage of the following:

- Virginia Politics
- Election Law in Virginia
- Dealing with Stresses on Candidates and their Families
- Planning and Budgeting
- Roles and Responsibilities of Candidates, Managers, and Consultants
- Opposition Research
- Message Development and Delivery
- Fundraising
- Public speaking
- Media
- Direct Mail
- Field Operations and GOTV (get out the vote)
- Crisis Management
- Online Campaigning

A consideration of ethics in campaigning is at the heart of all of these conversations. As participants discuss strategy, the issues that they face in their district and learn the skills they need to be effective, they are constantly challenged to consider the ethical implications of their actions on the campaign trail. Campaigns are about winning, but in the Sorensen Institute model they are also about ethical conduct, and participants are challenged to develop their own campaign code of conduct.

SPEAKERS

We are absolutely committed to maintaining a careful partisan balance among the campaign consultants and political experts who speak as part of the program. All our speakers have a wealth of experience in Virginia campaigns and elections.

APPLICATIONS

The application process is open to Virginia residents who are eligible to run for political office. Preference will be given to first-time candidates. A commitment to fully participate in the program is required.

TUITION

Tuition cost covers food, lodging and all program materials. Acceptance to the program is not dependent on ability to pay; financial aid is available.

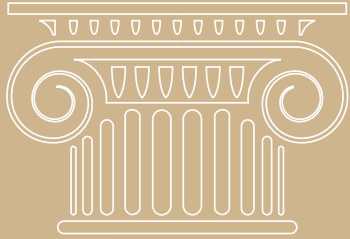
SCHEDULE

The four-day program begins on a Thursday mid-morning and runs until Sunday afternoon. A typical program day starts at 7:00 am with breakfast and class begins promptly at 8:00 am. Presentations, discussions, and workshops run throughout the day with multiple breaks and lunch. The evening sessions include a dinner, speakers, and discussion.

“Sorensen is helping to create a new generation of politicians, less bound by the tired ideological strife and politics of personal destruction that have so bedeviled past public discourse. I would highly recommend Sorensen’s Candidate Training Program to anyone who wants to win his or her election campaign and take a lead role in building a hopeful new future for politics and public service in Virginia.”

— Dave Norris, Mayor of Charlottesville
Candidate Training Program Class of 2006





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STATE BOARD

The Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership relies on private philanthropy to sustain its programs. It is housed as the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia and is guided by an Advisory Board composed of political, business, and non-profit leaders from around the Commonwealth, as well as University representatives. The Sorensen Institute also has eight regional advisory boards that help with recruiting and interviewing applicants for the various programs.

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