



# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESIDENCY

## CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESIDENCY WELCOMES THE PRESIDENTIAL FELLOWS BACK TO WASHINGTON D.C.

*SPRING LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE - MARCH 27-29, 2008*

Recently, the 85 Presidential Fellows of the 2007-2008 class returned to Washington, D.C. for the Spring Leadership Conference at the Doubletree Hotel Crystal City. As in years past, the Presidential Fellows met with policy analysts and experts and shared the first drafts of their original research papers with their peers.



*Center Trustees Wayne Berman and Thomas McLarty address the Fellows on the Presidential election.*

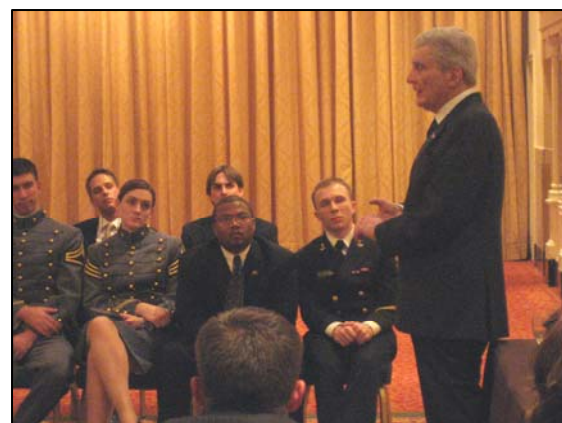
The conference opened on Thursday, March 27, 2008, with lunch in the hotel's Windows Over Washington Room, which provides a magnificent view of Washington D.C. and the Potomac River. The Fellows were welcomed by the Center's Vice President and CFO, Dr. Thomas Kirlin, who provided remarks on the history of the Fellows program and on the need for young people to pursue careers in public service. Ms. Julie Sarke, who was recently named Project Director of the Presidential Fellows Program, then provided these young leaders with an overview of the three-day conference experience.

After lunch, the Presidential Fellows were joined by Center Trustees, the Honorable Wayne Berman and the Honorable Thomas "Mack" McLarty, who led a lively discussion on the 2008 election and provided their perspectives on the Presidential candidates. Mr. Berman and Mr. McLarty, who sponsor Fellows from the University at Buffalo and the University of Arkansas, respectively; have intimate knowledge of the election process, having worked with successful campaigns and in the White House. Many Fellows asked astute and

thought-provoking questions of the panel about the merits of the campaigns and the candidacy of the front-runners.

The Fellows then gathered in their peer groups, each one facilitated by an alumnus of the Fellows Program, where Fellows presented the first drafts of their research papers. Many Fellows remarked that the fresh insights provided by their peers will help greatly as they refine their drafts before turning in their final papers in May.

In the evening, the Fellows traveled to the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel to take part in the 41st Annual Awards Dinner honoring Senator John W. Warner, Jr. with the Publius Award for his many years of distinguished service to our nation. During dinner, the Fellows were seated alongside ambassadors, political pundits and analysts, policy-makers, and heads of business. They conversed with these successful individuals about their experiences in the Fellowship as well as their post-graduate career and educational plans. After dinner, the Fellows had the special pleasure of a private audience with Senator Warner, during which they asked questions about his long career in public service. This intimate question and answer session was the highlight of the Spring Conference for many of the Fellows.



*Senator and Honoree John Warner discusses his long career in public service with the Fellows.*

On Friday morning, the Presidential Fellows reconvened for two presentations on the unique aspects of the 2008 Presidential Election. During the first panel on "Women

and Minorities in Federal Leadership," Dr. Danielle Prendergrast, a Board Member at the Women Under Forty Political Action Committee (WUFPA), and Dr. Sarah Brewer, Associate Director of the Women in Politics Institute at American University, discussed the media's portrayal of Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama with regard to their gender and race. The speakers concluded that media attention focused on the identities of the candidates detracts from substantive political debate. They also addressed the current theory that individuals feel compelled to vote for the candidate that shares their race or gender.

For the second presentation, the Fellows were fortunate to meet with Dr. Thomas Mann, Senior Advisor at Brookings Institution, who shared his expert perspective on the primaries and on the challenges that the next President will face with regard to Congressional division and discord. He also provided historical perspective on past Presidential elections. During the ensuing question and answer period, Fellows asked Dr. Mann to share his thoughts on the next President's challenges abroad and the ways in which he or she will need to ameliorate international opinion of the United States.

After Friday's lunch, the Fellows traveled to the Meridian International Center, a private non-profit institution that manages the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and is working with the Center on several projects. Meridian's Vice President, Ambassador Kenton Keith, and Ms. Susan Cabiati, who administers the IVLP, spoke to the Fellows about international diplomacy and the need for academic and cultural exchange to foster better relationships among members of the international community. Ambassador Keith cautioned that in a globalized world, leaders must differentiate between the appearance of American popular culture abroad and meaningful diplomatic exchange. After addressing many Fellows' questions about the state of public diplomacy, the Fellows toured the Meridian Center's beautiful mansions, including a current exhibit on the "Jazz Ambassadors," jazz artists of the early to mid-twentieth century who toured Africa and the Middle East on diplomatic missions.

On Saturday morning, the Fellows met with Center President and CEO, Dr. David M. Abshire, over breakfast. Dr. Abshire shared with these young leaders his hopes for the Presidential Fellows Program in the future, including online interaction from their home campuses and increased financial support from additional donors. He also updated them on other Center projects, including *Agenda 2008* and the Foundation for International Understanding.

Next, the Fellows returned to their peer groups to complete their paper presentations. As they disbanded, Fellows continued to discuss questions raised by their groups' papers. Many Fellows told the staff about their lively discussions on issues such as torture courts, the delegate selection processes and faith-based initiatives. After a light farewell lunch, the Presidential Fellows departed Washington, D.C. to return to their home campuses.

The Center would like to thank its staff and interns, as well as the mentors, alumni, and speakers who contributed their time and expertise to making the Spring Fellows Conference a success. We are especially grateful to the donors of the Presidential Fellows Program. Without their continued support and dedication to the program, we would not be able to reach and educate these promising young leaders.

For more information on the Presidential Fellows Program, please contact Julie Manus, Project Director, at 202-872-9800 ext. 227 or via e-mail at [JManus@thePresidency.org](mailto:JManus@thePresidency.org).