

From the Horse's Mouth

Florida's best students give advice to you



Contenders for the Florida College Student of the Year Award swap advice at the leadership retreat preceding the ceremony.



FSC's Cat Tobin

diversify her activities to be able to meet and attend to different students and their concerns."

—**Yasmine P. Taeb**
President, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Student Council
Treasurer, Islam on Campus
University of Florida
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"Get to know your faculty, staff, and administrators. Good relationships will help you and the students you represent."

—**Adam Singleton**
President, Mathematics Society
Jacksonville University
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"Be persistent! It's important to keep trying even when doors are shut. You also can't do anything alone. Get to know people and their ideas, and let those guide you. Also, recognize the people who have helped shape and form you."

—**Cat Tobin**
Executive Vice President,
Student Government Association
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Compiled by Ana Ribero

Let's play follow the leader—the *Florida Leader*, that is. The 2003 Florida College Student of the Year honorees give advice on what they do best—leading others. From overcoming adversity to improving Florida's future, these students know their stuff. Read on for their expert advice, and learn what it takes to be an exceptional leader.



Florida College's Jamie Lowe

What surprised you most about your transition from being a high school leader to a college leader?

"I was excited about the freedom and the opportunities college presented. You have a little more room to be creative in organizing things. You're looked at more as an adult."

—**Jamie Lowe**
President, Circle K
Vice President, Phi Theta Kappa
Florida College
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What advice would you give to up-and-coming leaders?

"Make sure that you're well-versed. A student leader is an individual who's a leader in many aspects of student life. Whether the student is a leader in the residence halls, a fraternity, a community service organization, a religious organization, or SG, she needs to

"I discovered a willingness on the part of college administrators to aid student leaders in accomplishing their goals. I was surprised by how many contact persons were available to recruit as resources and the numerous organizational and bureaucratic channels through which I had to find my way through to make things happen."

—**Jason R. Guercio**
Chief of Staff and Internal Affairs,
Student Government
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How do you overcome adversity?

"Perseverance. Attitude is everything. You can choose to make your life into anything you like. 'Spin doctor' your life and fight for what you believe in. Just don't forget the value of compromise."

—**Bruce Haupt**
President, Student Government Association
Vice President, Phi Theta Kappa
Board of Governors, American Red Cross
Brevard Community College
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"By staying focused on the overall goal or big picture. By staying positive."

—**Kelly Browning**
President,
Graduate and
Professional Student
Organization
University of South
Florida
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UF's Michael Gale

What qualities make you an effective leader?

"Having a passion that others can see and feel, being able to speak with and in front of people,

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and having the ability to concede to any person and to learn his story.”

—**Michael Gale**
Executive Representative,
National Collegiate Honors Council
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“The ability to facilitate and delegate is of utmost importance. Yet I find that it’s imperative to have fun. By enjoying what you do and showing that you’re having fun, it becomes contagious and will have an enormous impact on efficiency and productivity.”

—**James Chambers**
Vice President,
Student Government Association
Vice President, *Habitat for Humanity*
Secretary, *Phi Sigma Kappa*
Vice President, *Omicron Delta Kappa*
Stetson University
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Rollins' Andrew Merkin

What will most improve life in Florida in the future?

“The key to a prosperous future is tolerance. We must celebrate and be willing to challenge stereotypes.”

—**Steven Cohen**
National Chairman and CEO, *Friends for Life of America*
University of Florida
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“I think the lessening divide between demographics will improve life in Florida because it’ll turn differing perspectives into one.”

—**Andrew Merkin**
Vice President,
Student Government Association
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If you had the power to change one thing about your school or the Florida educational system before you graduate, what would it be?

“If I could change one thing about UF, it would be to increase the

“I believe that obstacles are means to help you become a stronger and a more intellectual person. I confront them with a lot of courage, faith, and trust in myself.”

—**Vincent Lau Chan**
President, *Phi Theta Kappa*
Miami-Dade Community College—North



MDCC's Vincent Lau Chan

What is the most important issue Florida college students face today?

“As more and more students attend college, there becomes more students with large financial debt. Colleges help tremendously, but in today’s economy, the state scholarships are never guaranteed and leave many students anxious.”

—**Cat Tobin**

“The most important issue any college student faces is the temptation to waste their time while in college. Many students come to college thinking that it’s all about having a good time and partying. But what you do in college will shape your future and who you are. It’s important to take time to study and also look for ways to improve the world around you.”

—**Jamie Lowe**



UF's Yasmine Taeb

administration’s commitment to promoting diversity by adding more programs promoting culture and diversity. By educating the student body, the tension on campus would diminish and the campus climate would become more pleasant and tolerable.”

—**Yasmine P. Taeb**

How has your group improved the quality of campus life for students? How can it be further improved after you graduate?

“The honors program has nurtured a unique group of students in a way that greatly compliments the undergraduate experience at my university. Through the Honors Ambassadors, we have strengthened the image and prestige of our program while providing important leadership opportunities to those chosen as Honors Ambassadors.”

—**Michael Gale**

“We have increased the level of communication between university administration and SG. New leaders need to continue meeting with university officials to work toward a common goal of increasing student services.”

—**Brian Battles**
Vice President and President Elect,
Student Government
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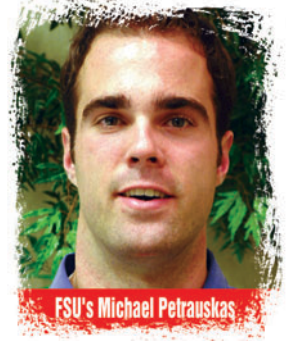


UCF's Brian Battles

How do you make your visions a reality and get others excited about them?

“I develop, organize, plan, and research what I want to do before I begin. I encourage others to get involved and develop support before I get in too deep. I encourage others to be as creative and driven as possible.”

—**Michael Petrauskas**
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant
Chairperson, *Dance Marathon*
Florida State University
mikepetrauskas@hotmail.com



FSU's Michael Petrauskas

“I get others involved by rolling up my sleeves and participating myself. Organizational leaders should never delegate something they wouldn’t be willing to do themselves.”

—**Steven Cohen**

In what specific areas will you use your leadership abilities after you graduate?

“I will use my economic background to continue to work in government, ensuring that economic policies will have direct benefits to the citizens of this nation.”

—**Brian Battles**

“I intend to bring my leadership abilities to bear in all of my future endeavors. I hope to become a leader in the medical field, whether it is in clinical practice, clinical research, or academic medicine. Medicare needs effective leadership in order to best respond to patients’ needs.”

—**Jason R. Guercio**

Find out how to apply at floridaleader.com/soty



UF's Steven Cohen



UM's Jason Guercio