



Student of the Year honorees share tips at the annual leadership retreat preceding the ceremony and press conference in Tallahassee.

FSU's Stefanie McCormack

# Secrets for Success

## Get ideas from Florida's top guns

Compiled by Chelsea Ellis

**W**hether you're struggling against adversity, trying to get your group members to embrace your vision, or contemplating a scary future, being a student leader is a tough job. That's why *Florida Leader* brings you advice from the 2002 Florida College Student of the Year honorees. Read on for first-hand tips on being a good leader under any circumstances. For more information on last year's winners or to participate in the 2003

Florida College Student of the Year Award, please visit [www.floridaleader.com/soty](http://www.floridaleader.com/soty).

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

"Life is full of second chances! As a high school student, I never aspired to any visible leadership position. As a result, the positions I reached at St. Petersburg College

represented uncharted waters. The surprise came about in the passion I developed for assisting in another's life. The ability to talk to another individual from their standpoint has been an asset I have

exploited to foster unique relationships among a diverse population."

—**L. Stefan Moroney**  
01-02 Executive Officer, Phi Theta Kappa  
St. Petersburg College-Clearwater  
luis.moroney@ptk.org

**How do you overcome adversity?**

"I overcome adversity through my assertiveness and determination. Whenever I see something that clearly fosters adversity, I try to act upon that and create events or projects that promote learning and understanding. One such event was an International Fest in which we had many [ethnic] groups represented so that students could learn about their cultures and the diversity within our university."

—**Leyda H. Su Ham**  
01-02 President  
Pre-Med Society  
Nova Southeastern University  
suhaml@nova.edu

**What qualities make you an effective leader?**

"I've been told that my charisma is contagious, so I try to be as enthusiastic as possible to inspire others to envision all of

the future potential that I foresee. I also never act only as 'the leader.' When we're working on a project, I get down in the dirt with everyone else and work on the nitty-gritty. If you're too good to do the grunt work, then you're not an effective leader."

—**Charity E. Hamilton**  
01-02 Director of Clubs and Organizations  
Student Government Association  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
peerlessme@aol.com

"I'm passionate about the organizations I'm involved in. Because of this, I'm able to make selfless contributions for the betterment of the organization both as a leader and a member. I also hold leadership positions because I want to make a difference, not for the title that comes with the position. I always try to see both sides of any argument; therefore, I'm an effective and creative problem solver. Also, I'm an effective leader because I have a positive outlook on life and see the beauty and potential in each person I come in contact with. I always try to energize people to act by building an understanding and desire for action within themselves."

—**Stefanie McCormack**  
01-02 Site Leader, Alternative Break Corps.  
Florida State University  
sgm5693@garnet.acns.fsu.edu

**What advice would you give to up-and-coming leaders?**

"Mentor with someone who's a leader. Study their style, the good and bad, and try to embellish their good traits and minimize their bad ones. Somewhere in there develop your own style."

—**Elvis Brazil**, 01-02 President  
Student Government Association  
Miami-Dade Community College-North  
elvis\_brazil@msn.com

"Passion is leadership, so first learn about yourself—what drives you to act, and what is special to you. Learn about yourself, and then use that to lead and create change."

—**Michael Gale**  
01-02 Student Government  
Cabinet Coordinator  
University of Florida  
divrsify@ufl.edu

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

"Students are more aware now that enthusiasm is independent of age. Non-traditional students can experience all the aspects of collegiate life including the fun and



SPC's L. Stefan Moroney

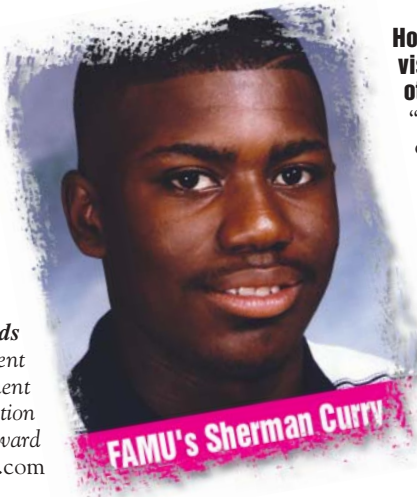


NSU's Leyda Su Ham

Check out the SOTY website at [www.floridaleader.com/soty](http://www.floridaleader.com/soty)

fellowship that comes through participation in extracurricular student activities. To continue the legacy, I mentored many new students who will inherit the leadership roles I currently occupy.”

—**James Reynolds**  
01-02 President  
Student Government  
Association  
Rollins College-Brevard  
cgsurfari@aol.com



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

“A vision must be communicated to all that you lead. The best way to communicate an organization’s vision is to live it. If people recognize you’re inspired, they’ll become inspired as well, and the seed will be planted throughout your organization.”

—**Sherman Curry**  
President  
FAMU Student Chapter of IMA  
Florida A&M University  
shermanmaurice@aol.com

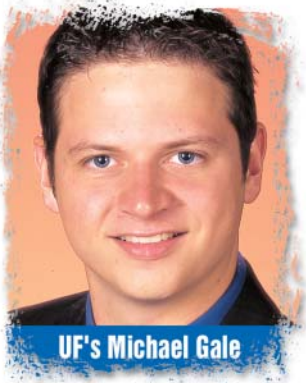
“Beta Theta Pi is deeply involved in campus events and community service. It has increased the appreciation for leadership, academic excellence, campus involvement, intramurals, and school pride. After I leave I hope my organization can build more bridges for future students and leaders.”

—**Richard Dudley**  
01-02 President  
Beta Theta Pi Fraternity  
University of South Florida  
pocket140@aol.com

“By laying down a strong foundation of commitment, I try to empower my peers through dedication and hard work. It’s also important to make sure your organization’s vision reflects a collective action that is firmly rooted in the members’ shared values. Only then will they become excited and want to be a part of positive changes. To get group

**“Improving a campus is about solving problems and strengthening communities. I work to do both of those in everything that I do.”**

—**Michael Gale**  
01-02 Student Government Cabinet Coordinator  
University of Florida



**What’s the most important issue Florida college students face today?**

“Trying to figure out what their next step would be. It’s hard to know what exactly you want to do, and colleges are the nesting-ground for self-development. It’s often difficult to figure out what we should get involved with. In college, you are truly preparing for the real world!”

—**Nour Kawa**  
Mentor, Alpha Kappa Psi Fraternity  
University of Florida  
nourkawa@hotmail.com

members excited about my visions, I have one meeting devoted to goal setting and I bring a list of those goals and a plan of action to subsequent meetings. In developing my visions for an organization, I make sure that my expectations are realistic, and then I divide them into short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals are necessary so your organization can track the progress it’s making. Through the progression of short-term goals, it’s easy to fuel excitement for any vision.”

—**Stefanie McCormack**

“As with all college students, trying to balance academics with a social life and extracurricular activities. Trying to find time to develop all aspects of ourselves.”

—**Amanda Howey**  
01-02 Director of Faculty and  
Student Interaction  
Organization of Students  
Eckerd College  
howeyam@eckerd.edu

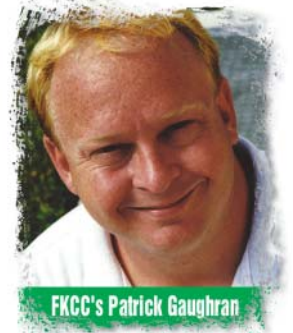


**What will most improve life in Florida in the future?**

“The preservation of our natural resources. The Keys and the coral reefs are under an extinction watch if measures aren’t taken soon to cut down on pollution causing damage to them. Populations are going to expand; we need to

set aside more Everglades, mangroves, and reef for protection.”

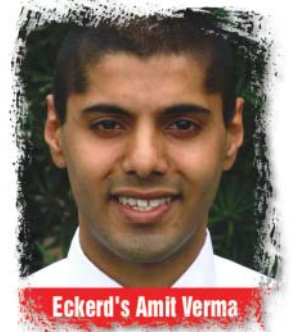
—**Patrick Gaughran**  
01-02 President  
Phi Theta Kappa Fraternity  
Florida Keys Comm. College  
cirdankey@aol.com



**If you had the power to change one thing about your school or the Florida educational system before you graduate, what would it be?**

“I would definitely try to improve the information technology resources available in many of Florida schools. As a computer science major, I realize that Florida lags behind a number of states in terms of technology. It must be realized that we are living in the Information Technology era, and it’s imperative for us to conform to the requirements of society.”

—**Amit Verma**  
01-02 Assistant Director  
Recycling Program  
Eckerd College  
vermaak@eckerd.edu



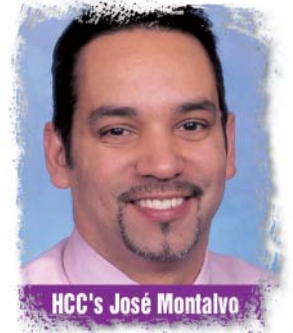
“Education reform will most improve life in Florida. We must ensure that students K-12 receive a good foundation for entry into college. Only with a solid educational foundation can Florida change its low-ranking status among colleges in this country.”

—**José Montalvo**  
01-02 President  
Phi Theta Kappa Fraternity  
Hillsborough Comm. College  
josemmontalvo@hotmail.com

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

“I hope that my experience will make me more marketable in the corporate world. I want to prove that I can efficiently run any organization.”

—**Oliver Davis III**  
01-02 Secretary  
Student Government Association  
Okaloosa-Walton Community College  
inedeamirakle@excite.com



“Leadership, diplomacy, organization, and time management carry over into many fields. I’m planning on working for the FBI.”

—**Rachel Russo**  
established Citizens for the Sea  
University of Central Florida  
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