Presidents' Leadership Award





Ryan Mahan
Keene State College

I have known Ryan since he was a sophomore as an outstanding and mature student, and I have seen him grow as a leader on campus. Ryan joined SAC when he was a freshmen and got involved actively in the organization with event planning, and this year he was elected President of the organization. Even more impressive is the recent Alternative Break trip he led to the Dominican Republic, over winter break. He with another student planned the entire trip, coached students, motivated them, and enabled them to have a life-transforming experience. The group worked with locals to make water filters and in educating the public on the importance of clean water. Ryan describes the conditions there in this way, "If you take a long shower, the way we do in the U.S., you have no water to drink. So its your choice". A tough choice for 20 year old Americans, but they did it and came away empowered by the experience. Ryan as the leader not only was part of this empowerment but also talks about how transformational this experience was for him. Originally he was thinking of going into the corporate world, but now he wants to work for a non-profit in advocacy which as a Communication major he is well prepared to do. I know from personal experience of taking students to India for a global engagement trip, how tough it is to manage their expectations of another culture, keep the motivation, and manage personal, medical, and other kinds of unforeseen issues that arise on an international trip. For a student to lead such a trip is quite amazing to me. Equally impressive to me is the way Ryan has been strategic in evolving as a leader. As mentioned earlier, he first joined SAC as a member, learned the ropes and then became President. Similarly, he went on an alternative break trip to Denver in his sophomore year and then decided to lead one himself. I seldom see that kind of initiative in students which is why I think Ryan is destined to go on to great things. His energy and charm are considerable and contagious and I heartily recommend him for the President's Leadership Award.