Hello Scene Readers! This is Ashley Sooklal, your state reporter, back with the third edition of The Virginia Scene! Many events have occurred since the last posting, so I hope you’re expecting lots of exciting things in this Scene...

—Leadership Academy—

—Leadership Academy from the officers’ perspective
—Member Interview
—Seniors of the officer team describe what it was like attending their final Leadership Academy
—Look for you or your teammates in featured photos!

—Technosphere Theme Announcement—

—Stay tuned to find out what your 2020 TSA state conference will be looking like...
Leadership Academy 2019 has come and gone in a flurry of magnificent extemporaneous presentations, marvelous bouts of collaborative problem solving, and a most meritorious champion rising to the top. Sure, it was cold. It was very cold. It was so cold, we all flocked to the hot chocolate and the wood fire stoves like we do to the semifinalist postings at Technosphere. But we prevailed against the chilling winds, the climbing walls, the hikes, and the tape pole! We communicated our way through reconstructing Lego statues, planned and prepared through council dilemmas, debated through ethical and interpersonal issues, and constructed through ravines. My friends, we ran an amazing race through the woods, and I congratulate you on the leadership skills you have demonstrated, the experiences you have gained, and perhaps most valuable of all, the fellow members of our delegation you have gotten to know along the way.

Alas, this is my last year of TSA, and the last year I will ever attend our fall Leadership Academy. It’s the last year I will play a ninety minute game of chinese checkers with advisors and students far too invested in a board game, the last year I can meet so many aspiring leaders for our rapidly innovating technical world, and the last year I can attempt to expound on the requirements of the LEAP resume (not that anyone will particularly miss it). The first year I ever attended Virginia TSA’s Leadership Academy was the first year I considered running for higher office, and I truly hope that some of you have returned home with the same idea. Thank you all for making my last Leadership Academy a wonderful experience.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alice Xu
Virginia TSA President
A couple weeks ago, I was able to participate in the Virginia TSA Leadership Academy of 2019-2020 as a state officer. This was also both my first and last LA that I would ever attend to in my high school life which was rather bittersweet. Needless to say, the experience I had with the event was something I have never really experienced before. I’m an indoor person, meaning that I prefer the safe-space of my basement and my home. So, getting out of my comfort zone was a real experience. Though, my friends in the Executive Council made my experience all the better. They were supportive, kind, and reassuring which made my experience with the event even better.

As a state officer, we were tasked to lead certain activities that the students will participate throughout their time at the academy. So, Defne Olgun (the Blue Ridge President) and I took the lead on the TED Talk activities. This activity put on emphasis on public-speaking and quick thinking. The students were put into groups of 2 or singles then were tasked to come up with a makeshift speech which supports the question that Defne or I will draw out at random from a cup. The fun part with this activity was the silliness of these questions. Some questions regarding this activity included ‘Cats or Dogs?’, ‘Coke or Pepsi?’, or ‘Do you cut your sandwiches in half or diagonally?’. After the speech has been made within the remaining time, the students who haven’t made their speech can debate against what the individual is saying in their speech. The debate part with the activity was absolutely hilarious and was a great time for the both of us!
A lot of students were passionate about what they were saying to the point where we had one group perform a whole skit about why Pepsi was better than Coke! Once our first set of indoor activities were finished, our outdoor activities began. Again, I’m an indoor person so I don’t really go out or do much of anything so getting to go on a hike, shoot a bow and arrow, climb a wall, and go rock climbing was an absolute experience. My favorite outdoor activity was the bow and arrow (even though I missed the target many times)! The best part of the experience was actually the last day of the event. In fact, it was my birthday and I was turning 18 that day. My friends made sure that my birthday was one to remember. The group sang me happy birthday and wished me happy day and happy year. Again, this was also my last experience with the LA and it was bitter-sweet. I wish I had experienced this in my earlier years of high school, but I still am grateful to have gotten the chance to experience this and help these students recognize themselves as leaders in their communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tori Torres

Virginia TSA Vice President
My experience at this past years Leadership Academy was second to none. I had such an amazing time meeting so many new people and getting to see many familiar faces. I also had the privilege of getting to participate in some ice-breakers, which everyone obviously loves, and getting to see individual members work as a team within their color groups to accomplish one goal. I hope you all enjoyed the sessions we created and even the surprising roadblocks that were along the way. I know myself, and many others enjoyed all of the outdoor activities, including climbing a rock wall, going on a hike, and archery. I’d have to say though, that my favorite part of this year’s Leadership Academy was not acting as an officer, but as in a sense stepping down to enjoy the experience as a member. Getting to dance as if it were the 1920s, play What Do You Meme, stay up late and raid the kitchen, and so much more made this past LA such a great experience. You all, the members make TSA such an incredible organization and make it like no other. I hope that next year we’ll see even more familiar faces and have an even greater time than this year. (P.S. GO MAGENTA MAD DOGS!!)

Respectfully Submitted,

Lexi Vencill

Virginia TSA Secretary
From bonding with my fellow officers, attempting to dance the Charleston (I say attempting because whatever I was doing did not look like the Charleston XD), and watching students blossom into leaders, Leadership Academy was a success. Leadership Academy is one of my favorite events throughout the year just because it is so different compared to everything else we do in TSA. I believe that at Leadership Academy it's our job to push everyone, and ourselves, outside, quite literally, of their comfort zones. This was our second year of holding Leadership Academy at a campsite instead of a hotel, because of this we were able to provide alternate activities than what we could at a hotel (ie. hiking, archery, rock wall climbing, and more). This proved quite the switch of environments from some of our city-dwellers. We had some “campers” who had never been camping before and some who generally didn’t have very much experience with the outdoors! Our very own President Alice Xu went hiking with some very fashionable dress shoes, I think she may have regretted that later!

As a senior, I am very sad that this was my last Leadership Academy. On the bright side, it’s exciting because I’m turning towards a new chapter in my life and for that to happen I have to close this one. I am also happy that next year someone else will get the chance to be in the shoes that I have been for two years and experience all of the fun we get to have and the friendships we make. I couldn’t have asked for a better Leadership Academy to have been my last one, well it could have been a little warmer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sierra Funk

Virginia TSA Treasurer
Hello everyone! As school is getting a bit more hectic, I feel like right now is a great time to reflect back on Leadership Academy. The trip to Keezletown was long, but worth it. Instantly, we were greeting campers, members, and advisors. While at camp, I felt like I was living in a very homely environment. I loved it! Even from my roommates, to the bitter cold. On Saturday, everyone took to the wilderness. My group started off with rock climbing. I remember I had a hard time getting to the top, but eventually I made it. We followed that session with hiking, archery, group activities, and a campfire to put it all together. Although the outdoor activities were definitely something to remember, seeing everyone again, members and council, always makes me the happiest. I got to hug familiar faces, and greet new ones. We left camp feeling fulfilled and refreshed. I would say that this Leadership Academy for me was the best one yet!

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Sooklal
Virginia TSA Reporter
I can’t believe that this was my last Leadership Academy ever. This year was my 7th year attending Leadership Academy and definitely one of the best. I can tell stories from the “Going Global”, “Shipwrecked”, or “Get a Clue” Leadership Academies; however, what’s even more memorable than funny moments are the people I meet. Leadership Academy has always been about meeting new people for me. My freshman year, I met Nick, a guy from Turner Ashby High School who I went on to serve on State Council with the next year. My friendship with Nick is proof that Leadership Academy can connect you with amazing people from across the state. This year, I had the pleasure of getting to know the white team, along with my fellow officer Madelynne. I spent time with people from Turner Ashby High School, Deep Run High School, and Jamestown High School and had so much fun with everyone I met. I’m sad that I won’t have the opportunity to attend another Leadership Academy, however, I am happy that I was able to have fun my senior year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria Compton

Virginia TSA Parliamentarian
Hello Virginia TSA! I hope everyone had just as an amazing time as I did at leadership academy! It was an outstanding weekend filled with fun and games. For me personally I think archery was a huge hit. I had the time of my life! Last year, I was participating in leadership academy. But this year, I helped plan and run it! It was a great time working with my fellow officers to plan and run it! I was lucky to be able to meet some of you great people. I had a lot of fun talking, playing, and working with the people in my cabin. I ran the building activity with Lexi, and Vijay. It was so much fun watching you all work together for a common goal. In our activity you all made a bridge, boat, and shelter. It was crazy to see everything everyone came up with! Some of the shelters were able to hold an entire team! That’s awesome! The outdoor activities were great! Watching people nail the target in archery, fly through the rock wall course, and hike through the mountains was such an amazing experience! All of you are amazing and wonderful people who will do great things. I watched each of you and knew, that you guys were the future leaders of our wonderful association. I can’t wait to see you all at our next leadership academy. We will take all of your tips into account and make this next one even better! I can’t wait to see you guys at Technosphere!

Respectfully Submitted,

Greyson Williams

Virginia TSA Historian
This year’s Leadership Academy was amazing, and if you attended, I hope you had a great time. This was my second year attending Leadership Academy and my first as a State officer. Unlike last year’s Leadership Academy, this year was held at Brethren Woods Camp. This change in location meant that everyone would be experiencing something new, from the trails we hiked to the cabins we stayed in. As a senior, I knew that this year would be my last year attending Leadership Academy, but I believe that I made the most out of it. Being a State Officer brought work and many challenges but, in the end, the entire council worked together to make Leadership Academy, in my opinion, great. Leadership Academy was also filled with funny movements like when my friends and I woke up at 5 AM to watch the sunrise just for the mountains to block the view. We also woke up a whole two hours before the sunrise which made the situation even more disappointing. I also had the opportunity to meet new people from across the state. Meeting other members expanded my view of leadership within TSA and let me hear their experiences. If I had the chance to speak with you during this year’s Leadership Academy, it was really great getting to know you and I hope I see all of you at Technoshpere.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vijay Vadi

Virginia TSA Sergeant-At-Arms
I first started TSA in middle school. I knew I wanted to participate in an activity where I could learn more about STEM, and TSA provided that for me. I went out of my comfort zone, learning about deep-sea explorations while making a book for Children’s Stories and created the first animation of my life while doing STEM animation! TSA has taught me to be fearless about learning new content and challenging myself. As a self-proclaimed biology and computer science nerd, I’ve learned more about how to apply my knowledge to solve problems. At TSA, I have competed in different events and explored new technologies to solve problems: My love for computer science flourished while I competed in different coding events; I was able to use my wet-lab experience in biotechnology design.

Serving the community that helped me learn so much is what inspired me to run for TSA Northern Virginia regional president. I’ve had a great time communicating with high school chapters in the region and running Fall Rally! As my last year in TSA progresses, I think of the motto, “Learning to Lead in a Technical World.” My experience in TSA has affirmed the importance of STEM, teamwork, and community. I look forward to whatever college may bring but I will never forget how TSA has been such a large part of my high school career.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Iyer

Northern Region President
This year, I really enjoyed Leadership Academy. While I’ve attended and had a blast at Leadership Academy in past years, it was so much fun to plan it as a member of the council and as a Co-Chair of the Leadership Development Committee. It looked like everyone really enjoyed the sessions, which I had fun planning with the officers. I also loved participating in the outdoor activities with everyone! Plus, the views at the campsite were gorgeous!

As a Senior, I knew this would be my last Leadership Academy. For that reason, it was bitter sweet. I was excited to be planning it this year since that brought a new element to something I already loved. But as the year progresses, I realize how many TSA lasts I’ve already done, which makes me so sad. However, I feel like this Leadership Academy was the best one yet and I had such a great time (even though it was freezing).

Overall, I’m so glad to have the memories and photos from Leadership Academy. Thank you for the opportunity to plan this for you and get to know everyone that went!

Respectfully Submitted,

Naomi Nichols
South Central Region President
This year was my third year at Leadership Academy, and my first one on state council. The experience I’ve had running my session, engaging with members, and partaking in outdoor activities was absolutely spectacular! Based on my personal Leadership Academy experience, this year was definitely the most engaging for both members and officers. I’m very excited to see what everyone who came has in store for this upcoming year and beyond, within and outside of TSA!

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Stinson
Southwestern Region President
The 2019 Leadership Academy was such a thrilling experience and I am grateful for meeting every participant. I will definitely hold this Leadership Academy dear to my heart as it provided me with an opportunity to strengthen my friendships with the Executive Council and Tidewater Region Council. This year the academy was held at the Brethren Woods Camp and Retreat Center in Keezletown. It was my first Leadership Academy at a campground and I was so excited. I thought the setting was very fitting because it complimented the lively activities planned by the council and camp leaders. I think my favorite Leadership Academy experience was hearing every group’s solution to the random and TSA themed mad lib problems. However, roasting marshmallows and eating s’ mores was a close second. Ok... and the outside activities, as well as the parli pro skit, ranked up there.

Unfortunately, the 2019 Leadership Academy was my last academy, but all of the arrangements made it the greatest to end on. From breakfast to high ropes, everything was perfect. Participating as an officer definitely made it interesting and I will never forget working with the rest of the council to execute Leadership Academy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sydney Funk

Tidewater Region President
When I first decided to co-chair Leadership Development, I wasn’t so sure what to expect out of Leadership Academy. However, I couldn’t be happier with how it went! From the outdoor activities to all the sessions hosted by the council members, everyone looked like they were having a good time. The TED Talks session heard fantastic speeches from all members of our delegation. From food pyramids to Star Wars to cereal methods, we were blown away by all the creative things people came up with. This was only my first Leadership Academy, but as a freshman, I can’t wait for all the future opportunities to come back and experience it again.

I loved being able to meet delegation members and truly get to know them over the course of the weekend we spent together at Brethren Woods. It was an opportunity unlike one you would experience at a conference, where you don’t see the same people all the time. I formed several long-lasting friendships at Leadership Academy and also grew previous ones. Also, getting to see all my fellow council members and spending time with them was lovely as always! Overall, I have to say that Leadership Academy blew me away and is a weekend that I’ll never forget.

Respectfully Submitted,

Defne Olgun

Blue Ridge Region President
The 2019 Virginia Leadership Academy was definitely one to remember. I loved the fellowship our membership shared at Brethren Woods and the meeting of new friends and old. The fire we held Friday night was a time for us all to bond and enjoy some delicious s’mores, leading to an overall sense of comfort for all of our members. Sleeping in the girls cabin was also a wild ride. The endless chatter led to a companionship that we carried throughout the entirety of the weekend and seeped into all of our sessions on Saturday. Despite the bone chilling weather at the camp, our outside activities were definitely my favorite part of the entire weekend. The teamwork our groups had to use brought all of us so much closer and truly bridged the ever shrinking gap between our officers and members. My favorite of the outdoor activities was the hike, mostly because our hike leader was such a cool guy. I really enjoyed watching our young leaders attempt to climb the rock wall. Sadly, I was too cold and scared of heights to climb it myself, but watching them was an inspiration and free entertainment! I also was excited to run the relays session with Victoria. Seeing each different group compete against the others really brought out my competitiveness and I mayyyyy have gotten a little too involved in their activities. Nonetheless, I had a great time bonding with students across our state and teaching them even the smallest things about leadership, and how to have fun while doing it.

Respectfully Submitted,

Madelynne Ritchie

Valley Region President
If I could sum up Leadership Academy into one word, I would say it’s an experience. It’s an experience that I believe everybody who is involved in TSA should have at least once. Every session offered something different, whether it was debating about group projects over individual projects, or TEDTalks on why Pepsi is better than Coca-Cola (which happened to be my favorite). Even when we did rock climbing there was a special group aspect to it. The feeling of so many people cheering you on to do your best was wonderful, and personally it made me want to do better. Aside from the team sessions I feel that the best part of Leadership Academy was the new friends that I’ve made, and the memories I now have with them. Whether we were playing King of the court during the middle of the night in the freezing rain or surrounding a warm campfire making marshmallows; there was not a dull moment in Leadership Academy 2019 and I can’t wait until next year!

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles Small

Highlands Springs High School
Hey everyone, I hope you had a fantastic start to the year! As Leadership Academy came to a close and the last Fall Rally is upcoming, we just wanted to let you know a little bit about what you can expect at Technosphere. This year, the theme is a blast to the past and a celebration of technological change, past and present: The Roaring 20s. The Roaring 20s was a time of prosperity and technological change. Most Americans would now own cars, radios, and telephones. It also saw women gaining the right to vote. Like last year, you will see glimpses of the theme throughout the conference and there will be planned themed activities! Likewise, this year’s mixer will also follow suit. Be sure to join us in the Speakeasy because we’re throwing the party of the year! Keep it quiet though, we don’t want the fuzz to bust our Juice Joint. Also, keep in mind, there will be a costume contest and a 20s dance contest. Prizes will be given out to the best dancing and costumed individuals. If you have any ideas for Technosphere you can contact me at treasurer.virginiatsa@gmail.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Sierra Funk

Technosphere Recommendations

Committee Chair
Technosphere
Speakeasy

- Dancing
- Costume Contest
- Dancing Contest
- Food + Drinks
- and more

May 1-3, 2019

The Roaring 20s
a time of technological change