

Program offers intro to politics, media

By PAUL BUSH

RINDGE, N.H. — Thirteen high school students arrive today at Franklin Pierce University for a whirlwind introduction to politics and how the media covers it.

The campus here in southwestern New Hampshire is beautiful this time of year, but the students won't have much free time to appreciate it.

What I wish they didn't notice was what a disaster zone politics and the press have become.

I teach the journalism part of FPU's The Presidency and the Press program. Over the 13 years that the program has run, it's usually been exciting to talk about the president, politicians and the press.

Now it can often be embarrassing.

As I look at the teenagers arriving on this beautiful campus, I can't help but think that we adults have made a mess of things. But when I think of what these young people wrote in their essays, I start to feel that there's hope.

Several of these students have attended the Presidency and the Press before. I know we're doing something right when one of them writes that the program "was amazing, hands-on, eye-opening and intriguing." But it's more than that.

They come here with their eyes open.



"The necessity of journalism with integrity is obvious," one wrote. They also come with lots of intellectual curiosity and a desire to learn. Most of the students this year want to improve their writing and become better journalists.

These kids are also involved in community service. One has spent more than 60 hours volunteering at her school and her church. Another takes part in a student-run group that, as she puts it, "provides food-insecure students with weekend meals."

What also makes me feel positive is that these teenagers even have something to teach the rest of us. "I think that learning to use facts and reasoning to back up your beliefs and opinions is crucial to being a contributing member of society," one wrote.

And she is just 14 years old.

Paul Bush is a journalism professor at Franklin Pierce University.



COURTESY PHOTO

HOPE: Among those participating in the Franklin Pierce University's The Presidency and the Press program are, from left, Bailey Matteson, Joe Wiley, Shanon Slater, Morgan Baker and Tyler Peterson. The program, co-sponsored by the Boston Herald, offers a whirlwind look at politics and how the media covers it.

Students follow road to the White House

RINDGE, N.H. — Over the course of this week, the Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication at Franklin Pierce University is partnering with the Boston Herald to lead high school and collegiate journalists and teachers on an exploration of the intersection between "The Presidency and the Press."

"The Fitzwater Center is thrilled to have this opportunity to connect talented young people from across New England with political, civic and media leaders to explore the critically important role of the media in our democracy," said Kristen Nevious, director.

Returning to the Fitzwater Center to participate in the program are Peter Maer, veteran



**Morgan
BAKER**

CBS White House correspondent, and Alexander Heffner, host of PBS' "The Open Mind."

And, the students will literally follow the road to the White House through the Granite State to meet with the state's political leadership in Concord and the state's media leadership in Manchester.

"We immerse these students in the business of journalism," Nevious added. "The program's days are filled with briefings and interviews, and Editor-in-



**Kendra
SYPHERS**

Chief Joe Sciacca and other Herald staff will work with the students on deadline to produce content for publication across platforms."

The Fitzwater Center has long leveraged its location in the home of the first-in-the-nation primary to provide student media extraordinary opportunities to engage in our democracy. Since 2006, it has guided credentialed student news teams through the presidential election cycle, from the first house parties and diner

stops to the Iowa Caucuses and the New Hampshire Primary. After covering both national political conventions, the team heads to Dixville Notch to report on the first-in-the-nation vote. The cycle ends with an assignment to cover the presidential inauguration.

"The Fitzwater Center was privileged to partner with the Boston Herald to cover the 2016 Presidential Election cycle," Nevious said. "The staff is genuinely invested in preparing the next generation of journalists to ensure the integrity of our national discourse."

Morgan Baker and Kendra Sypfers are Franklin Pierce University graduate students.

Participants share thoughts

Hear what some of the student participants have to say:

"The political landscape today is more about who shouts the loudest than who is factually correct. While not mutually exclusive, those shouting the loudest aren't necessarily using fact-based evidence. The nation cannot succeed when facts become obscured by noise."

— Paul Lambert of Worcester

"We need to do something about politics today because it has transformed into a battle of which party can consolidate the most power. Often policies are put in place in order for the party to achieve their own agenda. All the while not considering how the cooperation of parties can benefit the country over themselves."

— Alena Masterson of Pelham, N.H.

"Social media has given my generation the opportunity to be more assertive and unified than we ever have been. Both myself and my peers absorb news from different platforms every day, whether it be routine celebrity updates on E! News from our cellphones, or breaking news on politics or recent shootings from CNN. We are growing up in the crossfire of these events and reacting to them through social media, which personally gives me hope that my generation and those that come after will continue to be an informed, intelligent voice in the public that offers a fresh perspective."

— Alison Kaiser of Chester, N.H.

"I believe that we are a very special group that has a different way of thinking, a simplistic way of thinking. I think my generation will get rid of many stigmas and stereotypes simply because we all grew up so connected to each other."

— Jackson Morgan of Hookset, N.H.

"I think understanding the context of the presidency and the media is essential to understanding the American political condition, especially with the types of stories that pass as journalism today."

— Jack Zhang of Markham, Ontario