Honors Students Attend Social Entrepreneurship Conference in Washington, D.C.

A group of Honors Program students from Shippensburg University joined more than 200 business professionals, nonprofit representatives, higher education leaders, and public policy and government officials at a conference Friday, Sept. 25 in Washington, D.C., to discuss the role of business as a vehicle for both economic prosperity and transformative social change.

The forum, “Leadership for a Better World: Creating Social Value through Innovation,” was hosted by the University of Maryland’s Robert H. Smith School of Business at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center just down the street from the White House.

The focus of the daylong conference was on recognizing opportunities to use creative business and nonprofit work to improve the world in which we live. A lineup of speakers that included a Nobel Laureate, a PBS filmmaker, a Harvard business professor and author, and a National Geographic vice president shared strategies and insights for business practices that address important global issues such as poverty, climate change, and immigration.

“This conference gave us insight and encouragement about changing the world,” said Grace Burkholder, a senior accounting major from Harrisburg. “We heard from a number of dynamic social entrepreneurs who have succeeded in their endeavors.”

The Shippensburg students who attended the conference are part of an Honors Program Colloquium this fall in which they’re contributing to the social entrepreneurship movement by tackling the challenge of inadequate childhood education in the Dominican Republic.

The innovative solution the students are designing for this social problem is a blended academic and life skills curriculum that will be implemented at several child development centers in the Dominican Republic’s capital city of Santo Domingo.

“As we pursue our own social entrepreneurship project, we’ll draw from the experiences presented at the conference,” said Ally Morgan, a senior human resource management major from Mifflinburg. “The class is really excited to see this play out as the semester continues.”