

## Forgetting to Marvel (Continued)

I've been so focused on these efforts, however, that I've forgotten the bigger picture. Taking a small step back, I think about the beautiful end-of-summer/beginning-of-autumn weather that we've had lately. The skies have been so blue, the clouds white, the grass a vibrant green. The Academy is beautiful, and I am thankful that I have been blessed with the opportunity to go to school on such a well-maintained campus (thank you, Public Works!). But there is more to it than just how nice the grounds look (taking a bigger step back). I'm going to school at the United States Coast Guard Academy—a federal service academy! That is such an honor. I remember how proud I felt last year at this time or even this summer when I was out in the fleet. As my blog title states, I've been “forgetting to marvel”—forgetting to feel pride for the Academy and for the Coast Guard. I am very fortunate to have this opportunity to serve my country, to have friends and family who support and encourage me, to work under the instruction of Coast Guard officers and other professors who want the most for me and the other students, and to be afforded unique opportunities to travel around the country for special events. I was so much more aware of all this last year and I am just now realizing that I need to reflect on all these things more often instead of focusing only on the negativity that I confront. And I don't mean this blog to be poor appraisal of my friends and the other cadets. There are great individuals here, and I will be proud to serve with them in the fleet. Among the Corps of Cadets, however, there is a widespread sense of cynicism and a need to complain.

How can I go around encouraging others to be positive when I'm focusing on the negative?

So, back to the exciting! I formulated all these thoughts while in Washington, D.C. this past weekend (Sunday and Monday 23-24 September, actually). Speaking of special travels, I was selected to be one of two representatives of the Academy's Sustainability Club to travel to Washington, D.C. to attend the GreenGov Symposium and receive a GreenGov Presidential Award. While I was at the conference, my “bragging” about what the Academy has been doing to improve sustainability helped me to realize how much Good (with a capital G) I've overlooked recently.

After enjoying a few hours of liberty in the nation's capital, the other cadet, 1/c Stephanie Bugyis, and I were busy meeting with individuals from headquarters, including RADM Rabago, Chief Engineer of the Coast Guard, to discuss sustainability efforts at the Academy. These conversations were helpful for both sides of the table; we, the cadets, learned of ways to improve the effectiveness of our programs and the leaders at headquarters heard ways that they can support and promote our efforts.

Following our visit to headquarters (which was the first time I've been there, so that was a pretty neat experience!), we went to the GreenGov symposium where we visited booths of vendors from whom we may be able to receive assistance and materials for sustainability projects, and we attended sessions on several topics related to sustainability and how to improve (via behavior and culture change) sustainability in the places we live and work—so in our case, the Academy. I thought of some great ideas, and I think it will be beneficial for our club.

Our evening concluded with the awards ceremony where the Sustainability Club was formally recognized for the projects we completed over the last school year. Did I mention that the ceremony took place in the Eisenhower Executive Office, too? The trip was certainly a whirlwind, but it was great to have a small break from the Academy (and not have to worry about school work, too, because I was actually able to finish it before I left!); it was also beneficial for the Sustainability Club to get our name out there: Hurray! Networking! I've said it before, but I am excited for the upcoming year for the club.

Just as the Sustainability Club is going to focus on the positive aspects of a sustainable lifestyle, I will continue to remind myself of the positive aspects of *my* lifestyle as a cadet at the Academy. Above my desk, I've always had a magnet that reminds me of the importance of a positive outlook; the magnet displays in bold, stark lettering a quote by Mary Anne Radmacher: "What if we just acted like everything was easy?"

Yes, what if?