Com 260W Newsroom

BY: MATT SCHAEFER

Distinguished speakers are never in a shortage while on the Pennsylvania State University, University Park campus.

Wednesday was no exception to that as The College of Communications held the Foster Foreman Conference at 7:00 pm in Schwab Auditorium; Carol Leonnig, the keynote speaker, of the Washington Post spoke to the full auditorium of the Penn State community.

“Journalism is such an interesting path and every journalist should have a set of building blocks,” said Leonnig describing her career path. She has held positions at three different newspapers; starting with The Philadelphia Inquirer in 1989.

Moving from Philadelphia to Charlotte, North Carolina to work with The Charlotte Observer. Finally making to her current position with The Washington Post in 2000 where she has been for 15 years.

Larry Foster a Penn State Journalism graduate of 1948 founded the Foster Foreman Conference.

Foster felt that good writing is the essence of what we do at the college of communications and has founded this conference to inspire young writers with hopeful futures in journalism.

Held first in 1999, as biannual event by the Communications Department these conferences have collected 41 Pulitzer Prize winning writers, which includes Leonnig in a long list of successful careers.

This is the 33rd Foster Foreman Conference and Leonnig was still a valued guest as typical for these events.

Leonnig started her address to the crowd saying “Thank you for encouraging young journalists… without you I wouldn’t have gotten into the work.”

Leonnig won the Pulitzer Prize in 2015 for National Reporting and her coverage of the Secret Service.

This coverage includes confidential information Leonnig received from her sources deemed “whistle blowers” bringing attention to situations that was disrupting the main objective of the secret service that is to protect the President.

An infiltration of the Secret Service gives her the inside scoop on any controversial issue involving that department.

“Here you have the most elite law enforcement agency in charge of the safety of the president and his family who are behaving like keystone cops,” Leonnig said expressing her disgust with the corruption and failure the secret service was showing.

Following her coverage of her successful articles a question and answer session was held where the chair took questions from the audience.

“Listening to her (Leonnig) , I felt her passion for seeking to report on the hard issues; you could tell she wanted to make a difference with her writing,” said Arielle Arleth, a sophomore in attendance at the event.

Students in attendance felt compelled to listen to the successful writer speak “as a journalism major she really inspired me to work hard to reach my full potential and challenge myself to see what I’m capable of accomplishing,” said Kelly Petrie a junior who also was in attendance for the event.

These students were excited at the prospects of seeing someone who has found success within the field of journalism.

“I would definitely return to another speaker event because it’s very inspiring to see someone so passionate in their field sharing their knowledge with the new generation,” said Sabrina Krupko a junior in attendance for the event.

Leonnig, like many others of the keynote speakers for the Foster Foreman Conference, provided insight to how she evolved into the field and gave insight to prospective journalists.

These conferences give terrific insight making it no surprise why students return to collect advice from phenomenal writers each semester.