

ONWARD

Forge Alumni Stories



Read Luke's
Story on Page 5

Spring 2021

From The President

Here at Forge, we love stories.

Stories inspire us, teach us, and encourage us. That is why we are excited to bring you our Alumni Newsletter – jam-packed with success stories from our graduates. In this issue, you can read about alumni who have been led to our nation's capital and those who serve locally in their hometowns. When I reflect on their stories, I am struck by how they press on in their calling as servant leaders. We are blessed to get to catch up with our alumni who are each at pivotal junctures of their life and vocation. The title of this newsletter – Onward – is a fitting theme to sum up our alumni's accomplishments.

Tucked in these pages you will catch up with old friends from the Mentorship Academy, encounter stories of transformation, and glimpse the next generation of conservative leaders.

In the full swing of our sixth year, we are astounded by God's faithfulness and the diligent work of our alumni. We are blessed to come alongside you and these young conservatives and be a tool that God uses in their lives to grow them into leaders in public life. Year after year, we meet some of the top young leaders in the nation at our Summit and then have the privilege of walking with them through the Academy as they wrestle with big ideas, confirm and grow in their professional calling, and build life-long friendships.

It is your partnership that enables us as an organization to move onward and upward as we increase our impact. This year, because of generous champions and supporters like you, we have expanded our capacity to serve these young conservatives by hiring Grace Tarr as our new Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment. As an Academy alumna, Grace joins our team with a deep understanding of the powerfully transformative experience Forge offers. You can read more of her story on page 10.

I hope these stories encourage you and serve as reminders of God's work and your impact on the next generation of leaders.

Onward,



Adam Josefczyk
Forge Leadership Network
Co-Founder & President



Our Partner Organizations



Public Policy. Engagement. Education.



**STUDENTS
FOR LIFE**
OF AMERICA*



ALLIANCE DEFENDING
FREEDOM

Contents

Catch Up With Alumni

- 3 Alexis - '19 Forge Academy
- 4 Anna - '19 Forge Academy
- 8 Micaela - '17 Forge Academy
- 16 Danny - '19 Forge Academy
- 17 Olivia - '18 Forge Academy

Forge Stories

- 5 "Equipped for Fighting the Good Fight" - Luke '18 Forge Academy
- 11 "God's Extraordinary in Our Ordinary" - Grace '19 Forge Academy
- 13 "Rejuvenated Passion, Renewed Calling" Jordan '18 Forge Academy



Alexis Nester

Academy Year

2018 - 2019

Home State

Ohio

Vocation

Fellow with the Free Beacon

Alma Mater

Hillsdale College

Right: Alexis with Academy classmates during the wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery

What has recently been rewarding in your role?

I helped stop some Purdue students from taking a mandatory critical race theory-based class. This happened, of course, because a courageous Forge student came forward with the information. My reporting has recently focused on critical race theory and how state and local education boards are implementing this radical ideology on campuses.

How would your life be different without Forge?

Forge gave me the launching point for my career. Being part of Forge gave me great friends and connections, as well as professional development, to prepare me for my career.

What is your favorite Forge memory?

When I went to Israel with Forge, I had the opportunity to pray at the Western Wall. I remember feeling the warmth of the stone under my hand. Jews have prayed there for centuries, and in that moment, I felt connected to the roots of my Christian faith.

What made you want to be a part of Forge?

A random conversation with my Aunt. She's friends with Forge Staff member Jennie Simunek and suggested that I look into the program. That's why I joined. But I stayed because of the people. Everyone in Forge is really striving to grow as professionals and as people, and that inspired me to do the same.



What has recently been rewarding in your role?

I am currently in the midst of my final year of law school at University of Dayton School of Law. I intern part time for Justice Kennedy on the Ohio Supreme Court and I am the President of a Women in Law and Leadership (WILL) a club I founded at school. I'm most proud of starting and running WILL during my law school journey as it has created a space for students to build community and become more educated about what it practically looks like to be a woman in the legal profession. At work, it's exciting to research topics that are eventually argued about in oral arguments and to hear the kinds of questions the judges are asking - sometimes I know the answers!

How would your life be different without Forge?

Forge really gave me the final push to go to law school. I was talking to Co-Founder Justin Powell about my future and he just said go to law school now - why not? So I did.

What is your favorite Forge memory?

My favorite memory would have to be the boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and the amazing fish we ate after!



Anna Self

Academy Year

2018 - 2019

Home State

Ohio

Vocation

Law Student

Alma Mater

University of Dayton
School of Law

*Top: Anna at the Ohio Statehouse
Bottom: Anna on the Sea of Galilee with
fellow 2019 Academy members during Forge
Israel*



Luke Schroeder

Academy Year

2016 - 2017

Home State

Ohio

Vocation

Staffer,
Republican National Committee

Alma Mater

Miami University (Ohio)

Photos Clockwise from Left:

Luke in Jerusalem

*Luke at the 2018 Forge Banquet catching up
with Adam*

At the Ohio State House during the Summit

In front of Air Force One

Equipped for Fighting the Good Fight

We are truly blessed to live in the United States of America. As Americans we enjoy more freedom and opportunity than any other people, in any other nation, in history. As if this isn't enough, we have also become the world's superpower, and now serve as a shining city upon a hill for all who seek democratic self-governance in their own nations. Our country is an exceptional place - a place we must not take for granted.

As Jefferson warned, "even under the best forms of government those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny." That's a message to remember. We cannot assume America will continue to succeed if left on autopilot, and we can't extend deference to leaders who attack, or fail to defend, the foundational values that make us great. If we do, we risk a future of an America in decline.

That's why we need more men and women of principle to engage in politics, business, law, and their communities - with an eye to the future, we need to invest in the young people who, one day, will be entrusted with the power Jefferson wrote of. To effectively defend our republic from falling to tyranny, these people must not only be smart and capable, but must also be armed with the ability to stand steadfast in moral values and truth. That's where Forge comes in. For its students, Forge delivers meaningful lessons on state, federal, and international politics. Forge gives good people the tools needed to make themselves better, and empowers them to more effectively engage in the public square.

My journey with Forge started almost five years ago when I attended Forge's Leadership Summit in Columbus, Ohio. Everything about the Summit - the speakers, training, and the legislative simulation on the Ohio House floor - was so impressive to me. It may have only been a week, but it felt like a month's worth of content.

After attending the Summit I was selected to join Forge's Mentorship Academy, which gave me the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. and Israel. While in Washington, we spoke with leading activists, think

tank experts, and members of Congress. My class came away from the week with an expanded understanding of the inner workings of federal policy, an understanding that proved valuable for those of us who, like me, would later enter federal service.

Forge's Mentorship Academy also gave me the amazing opportunity to spend a week and a half in the beautiful nation of Israel. My time in Israel was life-changing, and better equipped me to grasp the complex geopolitical issues facing the Middle East. For a fellow Forge student who would go on to work on religious freedom issues at the State Department, I know this experience was crucial.

Without Forge, we would have never had this incredible experience.

One of the most valuable parts about Forge has been the relationships I've formed through all of these experiences. Even now, five years after I first attended Forge's Summit in Columbus, many of my classmates remain close friends and confidants. Investing in individuals isn't enough - and that's why Forge is building a network that will stand the test of time. For every Forge student, being a part of this network is priceless - I know it is for me.

After a year with Forge, every student departs the program with an incredible breadth of knowledge on state, federal, and



international affairs, and, perhaps most importantly, many lifelong friends who share their values and convictions. It has been inspiring to watch my fellow graduates (as well as graduates from other classes) go on to do great things in politics, journalism, law, and business. And these graduates have only had about five years to grow and succeed - imagine what they will do in the next fifty.

Last year, I had the honor of serving as a member of President Trump's White House staff. I wish everyone could have seen what I saw in my coworkers every day. Hidden by all of the partisan media's negative spin were hundreds of committed, faithful, and patriotic Americans doing their best to improve the nation we all love. Most of these folks will never be public figures, but their work mattered. Their work made a differ-

ence in the lives of millions of everyday Americans - it was a great privilege to work alongside them.

I saw in my coworkers the qualities that I see in many of Forge's

students - this is great news for all of us. Today, in the face of unprecedented attacks from a radicalized political left, our nation needs more people in her corner who will fight for her founding ideals, who will take on the ever-present mission of crafting a nation that lives up to our founding documents. Many of those people will come from Forge. The work Forge does is

so important for the future of our union. I couldn't be prouder to be part of such a great organization.

“One of the most valuable parts about Forge has been the relationships I’ve formed through all of these experiences. Even now, five years after I first attended Forge’s Summit in Columbus, many of my classmates remain close friends and confidants.”

Luke with his Academy class in Jerusalem, Israel





Micaela Wright

Academy Year
2016 - 2017

Home State
Ohio

Vocation
Public Information Officer,
Ohio Department of
Developmental Disabilities

Alma Mater
The Ohio State

*Left: Micaela with Academy members at the
construction site of The Museum of the Bible
Right: Micaela with Aramaic Israeli leader
Shadi Khalloul Risho*

What has recently been rewarding in your role?

It has always been my goal to move back to my hometown and when I took the job I was able to negotiate and make working from home permanent so I was able to move back. Also, working for the state, I can't participate in things that would conflict with the work I do, but my policy area of interest is unrelated so I am able to be more active in that area and am working on writing some op-eds.

What made you want to be a part of Forge?

I had a growing interest in politics after going on a lobby trip to D.C. with my college and changed my major to add political classes. About the same time that this happened, I heard about Forge. It seemed like a perfect opportunity to learn more about politics and how to connect my work with my Christian values.

How would your life be different without Forge?

Forge helped me to develop the "why" behind what I do and how I live out my faith in my work. I think I would have struggled to put all those pieces together on my own. It also helped me to build countless meaningful connections and my network would be much smaller without Forge.

What is your favorite Forge memory?

The campaign-in-a-day challenge at the Forge Summit was my favorite part of the week. I had to step up at the last minute to lead my group, which was out of my comfort zone, but we ended up beating the other candidate. In the process, I met one of my best friends. Since then, there have been countless amazing memories connected to Forge after the summit.



Forge Path

360

Students
Trained

180

Students
Mentored

126

Campuses

3

States

100% INCREASE

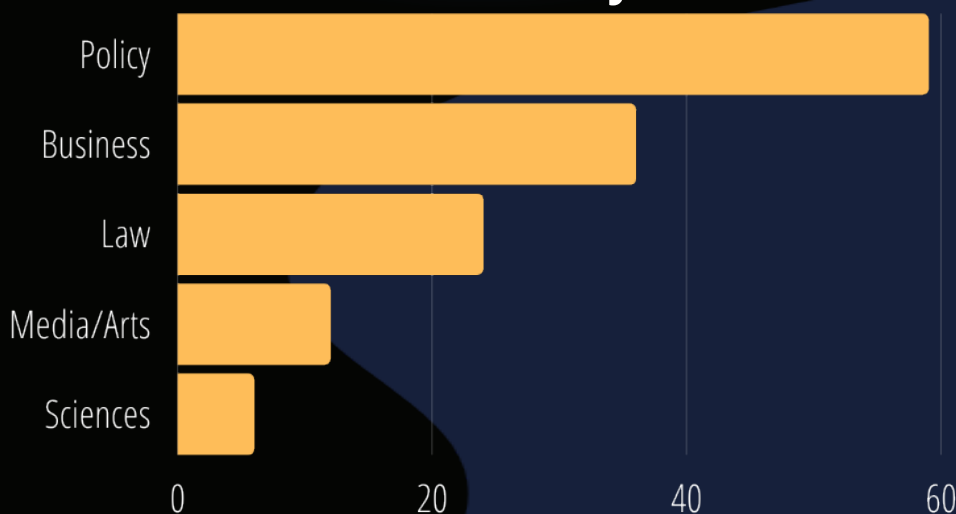
The number of students who were very likely to be actively engaged in politics and culture **MORE THAN DOUBLED** after attending Forge.

5

Grads serving in
elected office

Grads
pres

Where Are They Now?



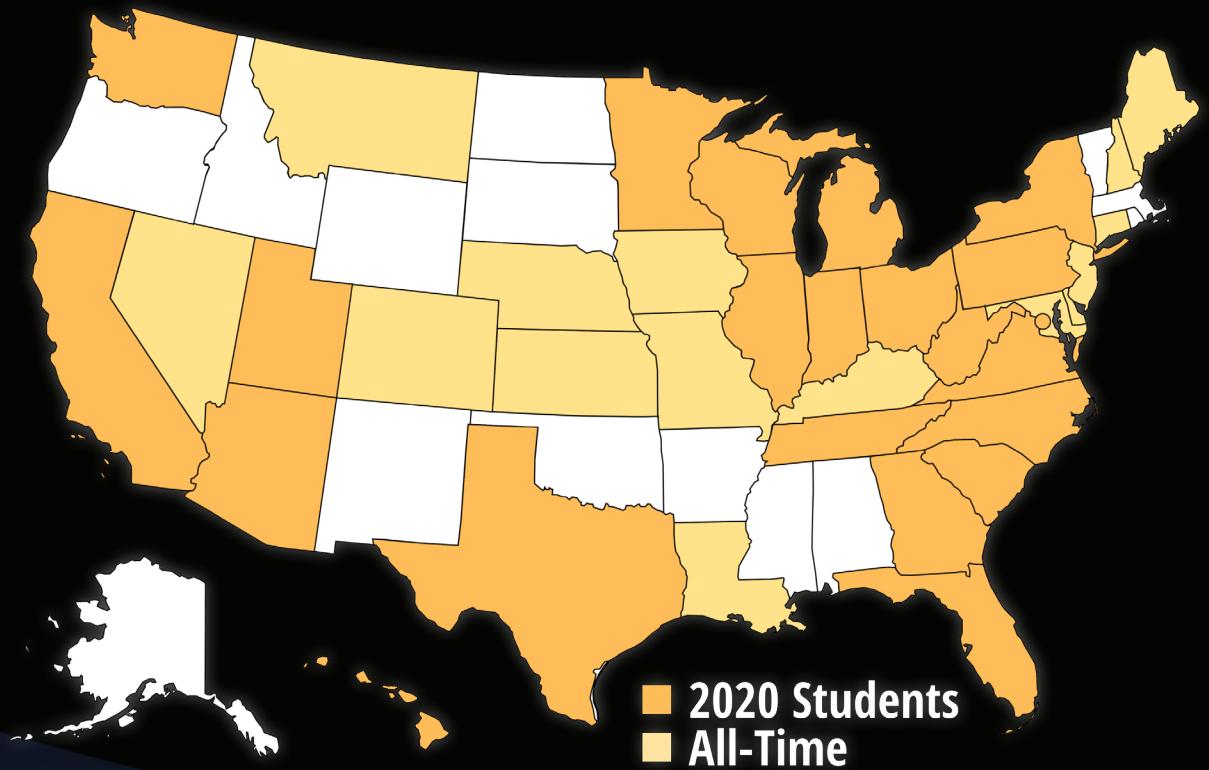
"Without the po
and incredible frie
can confidently say I
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of Success



6

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12

ds have worked on
sidential campaigns

50

Grads have worked
on Capitol Hill

licy and hands-on training, the amazing experiences,
ndships I received from Forge Leadership Network, I
would have never run for office. If you want to be in
onservative politics, the Forge experience is essential."

~State Rep. Jena Powell (Ohio)





Grace Tarr

Academy Year

2018 - 2019

Home State

Maine

Vocation

Director of Marketing and
Student Recruitment,
Forge Leadership Network

Alma Mater

Grove City College

Top: Grace with fellow Grove City College AEI Executive Council Members at the AEI Annual Dinner.

Bottom Left: Grace with Academy members at the Western Walling Wall.

Bottom Right: Grace and the 2019 Academy at the Supreme Court in Washington, DC.

God's Extraordinary in Our Ordinary

It was the end of a busy week of Freshman year and all I wanted to do that Saturday was sleep in.

That Saturday College Republicans were hosting Campaign-in-a-Day with American Majority on campus. Despite my reluctance to leave my dorm that morning, the day turned into a fast-paced and exciting challenge. At the end, the program leaders Matt Batzel and Scott Ellis told me that I really should look into a program called Forge Leadership Summit.

There are a few events in my life that clearly stand out to me as examples of God stalling the cyclical gears of our plans and inserting the extraordinary into the ordinary – that was just such a day.

And there it was, the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary.

I attended the Summit in July 2018 and went on to join the 2018-

“There are a few events in my life that clearly stand out to me as examples of God stalling the cyclical gears of our plans and inserting the extraordinary into the ordinary...”

2019 Academy class. When I look back on my time in the Academy, I am struck by the way Forge came alongside me by galvanizing my faith and challenging me to engage my campus as a member of the American Enterprise Institute Executive Council and the College Republicans Club.

During the Academy, I was surrounded by fellow leaders who inspired me. It truly was iron sharpening iron. Because of Forge and the examples of young leaders around me, I decided to graduate from college a year early. Looking back, there were plenty of times that I wanted to quit (especially during a 21-credit semester) but I had people around me through Forge who continued to encourage me.

Fast forward to the year after my Academy and I had just graduated college and May and had gone on to work on a Congressional campaign in the 2020 election cycle. Last year was a whirlwind of learning in the classroom as I wrapped up my time at college and on the campaign trail. Little did I know, just as I had been growing, so had Forge. In December, Adam and Jeremiah first approached me about joining the Forge team to help them expand their marketing and recruitment.

Joining the team was a no-brainer.

In my role as Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment here at Forge, I can live out my passion of connecting people and helping them pursue their vocations while working with a dynamic team at a growing organization. Transitioning from an Academy student to my role working for Forge has given me an even deeper appreciation for the impact of Forge. It is an impressive feat for an organization to live up to its mission – but it's even more striking when you get glimpse behind the scenes and see strong leadership and camaraderie within the organization.

That combination of mission success and team unity is the miracle of Forge – and I say miracle because I am convinced that only God could bring about what Forge has accomplished.





Jordan Leatherwood

Academy Year

2017 - 2018

Home State

Ohio

Vocation

Teacher

Alma Mater

Ohio University
Patton College of Education

Bottom Left: Jordan helping to lead committee hearings during the 2020 Summit

Bottom Right: Jordan as a student mentor at the 2020 Summit

Top Right: Jordan's Academy class at the Capitol

Rejuvenated Passion, Renewed Calling

In July of 2016, I was having a conversation with a friend of mine about what we wanted to do with our lives in college and beyond. He seemed to have everything planned out, but I honestly had no idea what I wanted to do with my major. He introduced the Forge Leadership Network to me, and said I would not regret getting involved.

I attended the 2017 Forge Leadership Summit at Ohio Christian University and was terrified. This Summit was the first time I had ever gone to a conference about politics and culture, and in the beginning, it was exactly how I expected it. Everybody was smarter than me, more articulate in debate, and out of my league. A small-town boy from Southern Ohio could not compete with that, I thought. What I did not realize,

“Through Forge, I learned to utilize my talents to have the biggest impact on the people around me.”

though, is how that one week would change my life.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “You must do the things you think you cannot do.” Applying for the Mentorship Academy (after the Summit) was a long shot, in my opinion. However, I was accepted, and soon realized that Forge is more than just a organization helping young people who want to go into politics. The mission of Forge is to mentor, train, and equip young conservatives to be the next leaders in the public square. What it became for me was much deeper than that; a lifelong journey into becoming a disciple of Christ.

Having just attended my fourth consecutive summit, and third consecutive as a mentor for new students, I would like to mention three specific ways that Forge has shaped my life and my future:

First, I found my calling during the Forge Summit. The very day after the 2017 Summit ended, I (maybe ironically) changed my major from

Political Science to Education. Through Forge, I learned to utilize my talents to have the biggest impact on the people around me. To me, the little acts make the biggest impact. You can teach an elementary school student to tie their shoe and it will change their life. Just your presence alone can give them a sense of comfort and safety when they may otherwise feel none. Education is more than content; it is care, and it is where I feel I am needed in my community.

I graduated from Ohio University in December 2020 with a Bachelor's of Science in Middle Childhood Education. While searching for full time teaching jobs, I am currently a substitute teacher at a public school district in southern Ohio filled with many godly teachers and staff (Praise the Lord!). Day in and day out, I get to impact the lives of Middle Schoolers through living faith and by seeing Christ in me.

Second, I found the greatest of friends who I consider to be brothers and sisters. The speakers and trainings are all fantastic parts of the Summit and Academy, but my favorite part is getting to form friendships that will last a lifetime. When I need prayer, support, advice, or just someone to talk to, I know I have a whole group of Forge friends that I can call on.

Finally, Forge was the spiritual experience I needed to get to know Christ. I firmly believe that if you have a real encounter with Jesus Christ, it will change your life. My love for Him grows deeper through the people I meet and the discipleship that takes place, whether intentional or not. I have found Ephesians Chapter 4 to be a great representation of what the Forge experience is.

"I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. There





is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:1-6 NKJV)

The Apostle Paul, a prisoner at this time, was pleading with believers to be unified in the Spirit, possessing qualities that make them worthy of their calling, from bondage to liberty. This unification is exactly the environment that Forge creates. It is one of passion and confidence, but also of humility and servanthood.

Forge has enhanced my passion, allowed me to find who I am in Christ, and set me on a path destined for success. It has helped me grow into the young professional I never thought I could be. It has given me a love for policy and debate and has given me some of the best friends I could have ever asked for.

Without the Forge Leadership Network, I would not have had the motivation to go back to college and pursue a career that I love and will benefit me for the rest of my life. Forge will continue to be an integral part of my continued education and the knowledge I have gained from the organization will serve me well throughout my career.

*Top Left: Jordan serving as a student mentor at the 2020 Summit
Bottom Left: Jordan on the Sea of Galilee during Forge Israel
Bottom Right: Jordan in Jerusalem in 2018*





Danny Rosengard

Academy Year

2018 - 2019

Home State

Massachusetts

Vocation

Law Student

Alma Mater

Quinnipiac University School of Law

Right: Danny with Academy classmates during Forge Israel in 2019.

What has recently been rewarding in your role?

I am currently in Law School at Quinnipiac University School of Law, continue to referee NCAA and youth ice hockey, and work at the District Attorney's Office Protective Order Unit.

What made you want to be a part of Forge?

I first found out about Forge when I was on Twitter. I was reaching out to people who were verified on Twitter and involved in Politics and Law. I came across Matt Batzel from American Majority and I asked to interview him. He mentioned Forge and after speaking with me he said it would be a great fit and I should apply. I was nervous, but he did mention going outside your comfort zone, meeting people from all walks of life, and will be a great experience. Hearing his stories about Alumni made me want to be a part of it.

How would your life be different without Forge?

This is a question I think about often. As much as I wonder what my life would be like without Forge, I also consider what other people's lives would be like without me joining Forge. Forge has given me the knowledge, resources and confidence to not only change my life but the lives around me. I always had a destination but never a vehicle to get there. Forge provided me with that vehicle. The friends and connections I have made with Forge have challenged me to be better and to think differently.

What is your favorite Forge memory?

My favorite Forge memory was in Israel when we visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem Israel and we wound up being a part of a wedding.





Olivia Rogers

Academy Year
2017 - 2018

Home State
Indiana

Vocation
Law Student

Alma Mater
Notre Dame Law School

Right: Olivia on the Forge D.C. trip in 2018.

What has Recently Inspired You?

The coolest thing I've done so far is probably watching one of Notre Dame Law School's professors be confirmed to the Supreme Court! Sitting in the NDLS library watching Justice Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation hearings was a very special experience that I'm grateful to have had.

How would your life be different without Forge?

Forge has opened more doors for me than I can count. The mentorship and support that I have received from Adam, Justin, and the many people I've met through the Forge network has been tremendous. Without Forge, I would not have made many of the contacts in political circles, I would not have gone to Israel or spoken with conservative leaders in Washington D.C., and I would not have the foundation of a community that holds conservative and Christian beliefs.

What is Your Favorite Forge memory?

I have many great memories from Forge, but the Forge Academy trips hold a special place in my heart. One of the first nights in D.C., we were scheduled to take a tour of the monuments at night. Keep in mind, this is January in Washington, D.C. It was pitch black and freezing cold. I was seriously concerned my fingers and toes would succumb to frostbite -- but it remains one of my favorite memories of that trip. There's nothing quite like seeing the monuments lit up at night, and since it was so cold, there was almost no one else around. We had the national mall to ourselves.





KNOW SOMEONE WHO
SHOULD ATTEND THE

FORGE SUMMIT?

50% OFF

TUITION FOR STUDENTS
YOU RECOMMEND

RECOMMEND A STUDENT

SCAN BELOW OR VISIT
[FORGELEADERSHIP.ORG/RECOMMEND](https://forgeleadership.org/recommend)



