Kairos Leadership Initiative
Empowers Students to Lead

At the end of the 2014 spring semester, over a dozen Virginia Baptist students and leaders slipped down to a house on the Outer Banks of North Carolina for a Kairos Leadership Initiative (KLI) retreat to process, reflect, and fellowship. Kairos Leadership Initiative is a year-long program for college-aged young adults who are high-potential leaders in their communities. They come from all walks of life and vocational calling. The prayer is that the participants will make a greater Kingdom impact wherever they are and whatever their vocational and volunteer context.

KLI is designed to help those leaders identify their identity in Christ, their personal strengths and gifts, and discern where God is calling them to serve their communities as leaders. The experience includes a weekend retreat in January, a week long retreat in May, and coaching and mentoring opportunities throughout the year.

Retreat leaders also walked the students through a process of finding their “mind strengths” and then broke them up into three groups based on the results of the survey. Using the mind strengths outcomes, students were encouraged to identify where their strengths had manifested themselves that week.

Tori Carroll, a rising junior at Virginia Tech, shared that she didn’t grow up in a “super Christian” home and came to college largely unfamiliar with basic Bible stories. She connected with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry her freshman year. By the end of her sophomore year found herself leading a Bible study. At first she was hesitant leading the study, but then took the approach that she was learning alongside the group. “Learning is such a big thing for me. I’m learning a lot here and I’m excited to apply it in my life as I continue to grow in my faith.”

Lauren Terrill, a rising senior at Christopher Newport University, had already undergone three years of leadership training through her school. However, she found that the leadership training through KLI provided a spiritual depth that was lacking in her previous training. “CNU focused on the practical ‘how-to’ aspects of leading, but KLI teaches that God provides the ‘how.’” She lamented that she’s often heard that her generation is the church of the future. “We’re the church of now – we’re leading now.”
The retreat wasn’t all work. Leaders found ways to mix fun and learning. They offered several competitions for the groups, allowing them to learn to work together and have some fun. In the afternoons, students had free time, with many hitting the beach or sitting by the pool. Still, even with the free time opportunities, a number of students volunteered their time to serve at a food pantry in Manteo.

After arduous semesters, the students agreed that the retreat came at the perfect time. For Mary Seward, KLI is helping with her transition from graduating college to attending graduate school at William and Mary in the fall. “KLI and the retreat this week has helped me process what I’m learning about myself and how to apply that as a leader in future situations....I’ve always been discipled, but now I need to help disciple and mentor others.”

On the last night of the retreat, Susan McBride, Emerging Leaders Team Leader at the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, shared with KLI participants, “I just want to tell you how proud of you I am. Virginia Baptists are incredibly lucky and blessed to have you as young leaders.” Amen.