



### Students meet Morrell

by Lia Albini, CLAS '10

UConn student leaders took a page from history on October 3 when they met with Margot Morrell, author of *Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer*.

"I wrote the book because I was just so interested in and inspired by Shackleton's story," Morrell told the student leaders.

"It can be seen as a metaphor for adversity and any situation where true leadership is key. Everyone has an Antarctic. If these men can survive, against all the odds and in such dire conditions, then what could there possibly be that we cannot accomplish?"

Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1914 was stranded in Antarctica when his ship was frozen in. He led his crew of 27 to safety, despite numerous pitfalls and harsh conditions. Lost for two years with no communication to the outside world, Shackleton kept his crew together and not a single life was lost.

This year, freshmen in First Year Experience classes and upperclassmen who are Leadership Legacy students read Morrell's book, attended the lecture, and met with her afterward in discussion roundtables.

UConn students were especially interested in Shackleton's use of optimism to keep his crew together, even in the most hopeless of situations.

"Shackleton really worked to train his mind and remain optimistic," Morrell said. "He was insistent on maintaining a positive attitude because it truly was the margin between living or dying. It wasn't always an easy task, but it was a 'muscular optimism' that he constantly reinforced. Once he set that tone, his men followed."



"The mind-body connection is something I think we don't always give enough weight to," said Linda Drozdowicz, CLAS '10, a molecular and cell biology major and Leadership Legacy student.

"The things these men accomplished and the conditions they endured were really remarkable. It is so important to have a happy and healthy team. By keeping the mind in a sound place and taking care of that part, you ultimately create a more productive and sound group."

Students were also curious about how Shackleton's lessons manifested themselves in Morrell's own life.

She told them how her knowledge about Shackleton guided her own experiences with cancer.

"I woke up alone in a recovery room after what was supposed to be a routine surgery and I realized that I had cancer," shared Morrell. "And let me tell you, the first thing you do is cry. But after that, as I lay there, I began to think about Shackleton and how he must have felt on South Georgia Island looking up at a mountain range and knowing that he and his men had to keep going and cross those mountains and go back for the others."

"Shackleton said that 'optimism is true moral courage,' and that is something that has really rung true in my life," she said.

"This was a great opportunity to spur more dialogue and discussion for our class," said Richard Wolak, who instructs an FYE course on the book, *Shackleton's Way* and has made numerous research trips of his own to the Antarctic.

"First-year students are sometimes reticent to express themselves, but an experience like this really lends itself to a greater interest and perspective on the topic. It sparks an interest and brings the material to life on a real level."