

## **Majoring in Leadership: A Review of Undergraduate Leadership Degree Programs**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to compare and contrast the leadership major in identified programs from universities in the United States. This was done in an attempt to develop a foundation for the leadership discipline. Utilizing interviews, surveys, websites, and evaluation of school materials as data sources, an initial list of 70 schools was narrowed to 15 upon examination of their academic curricula. A thorough evaluation of these 15 leadership degree programs was then conducted. Noticeable differences included varied school sizes, host departments, and credit hour requirements. Other inconsistencies included the focus of the program, the major scholars evident within the curricula,

and the disparity between theory versus skill development. Recommendations include further study of other leadership programs across the nation, examination of leadership graduates in the workforce, and collaboration among leadership programs nationwide.

## **Introduction**

It is well documented that over the last two decades there has been an explosion in the growth of student leadership programs on college campuses in the United States (Schwartz, Axtman, & Freeman, 1998). Now reaching nearly 1000 in number, these programs can be found in all areas of the academy. Some are co-curricular in nature and housed in student affairs and residential life programs while others are found in various academic departments. According to a recent study by Riggio, Ciulla, and Sorenson (2003), part of this growth can be found in academic courses, certificates, and concentrations. What is most interesting, however, is that a few selected colleges and universities have even developed full undergraduate degree programs in leadership.

This research is the first attempt to learn more about these unique schools and degree programs. It is our hope that this study can and will provide valuable information for leadership scholars, educators, and others who wish to explore the "leadership major." While this initial leadership degree analysis is limited in scope, the research team believes that the data does provide useful information for the field of leadership education.

## **Purpose and Research Themes**

In most established academic disciplines, from art history to business management to sociology, for example, there are some agreed upon building blocks and standards by which nearly all universities and scholars adhere (Mangan, 2002). We ask the question "Is this true with the relatively new majors in leadership?" Do the program architects, curriculum developers, and the faculty of these leadership degree programs share common philosophies and approaches to leadership studies? The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a common framework or foundation to this new emerging discipline. And if so, what is it? For the most part a typical political science student would be exposed to roughly the same subject matter whether they attend university X or university Y. Would that also be the case for leadership studies? Have these educators agreed on the basic elements of an undergraduate leadership major?

The purpose of this study is to carefully evaluate the 15 colleges and universities identified as having leadership degree programs for their commonality or lack of them. This study looks for consistency and patterns of uniformity among program elements. It seeks to identify both the similarities, as well as the differences between the various programs. To accomplish this, the data is divided into four categories or research themes:

1. School Profile – university type, enrollment, host school/college.
2. Program Profile – major name, degree type, requirements, description.
3. Mission and Purpose – central theme, learning objectives, theory and application.
4. Curriculum – course type, sequence, pedagogy.

The first area evaluated was the school profile. This included the college or university type (public or private), size of the institution (undergraduate enrollment), and the host school and college of the major. This information provided general insight into the schools offering degrees in leadership. The second research theme examined was the program profile data. Here the research team reviewed more of the technical aspects of the leadership degree program. This included the name of the major, host department, student enrollments, degree type, description, and course delivery options. This material provided a much more detailed picture of the leadership degree program itself. Third, the study examined the mission and purpose of the 15 leadership degree programs. This research theme evaluated the schools in the study by analyzing their theoretical foundation and learning objectives. This included the central program theme and philosophy, scholar impact, learning objectives and theory and application orientation. This information provided a more in-depth look at the overall philosophy and purpose behind the curriculum. Finally, the research team examined the major elements of the leadership curriculum. Here the research team sought to gain a better understanding of how the schools went about accomplishing their mission and purpose. The curriculum profile included the course types, the sequence of courses and course pedagogy. This data allowed us to make critical judgments on specifics of the various programs.

It is our hope that this study can begin the process, or at least a discussion, on these important program and curriculum development issues. We believe that this discussion is paramount to the future success of leadership as an academic discipline.

## **Methodology**

The method of inquiry in this research was primarily qualitative in nature. Multiple data sources were used which included interviews, surveys, internet searches, and evaluation of school materials. Although several different techniques were used to gather information, the assessment survey instrument remained consistent throughout the study. This instrument was designed by the research team to collect data in a manner which minimized bias and maintained consistency. The survey questions were grouped by the research themes to reflect the purpose of the research (Krathwohl, 2004).

## Data Collection and Analysis

The research team collected the research data from the spring of 2004 through the fall of 2005. First, the research team began the process with the identification and evaluation of schools that publicize their offering of an undergraduate major in leadership. Through an exhaustive web-based search, conversations with leadership educators at professional conferences, and the resource book *Leadership Education: A Source Book of Courses and Programs* (Schwartz, Axtman, & Freeman, 1998), the search initially returned a list of over 70 schools who offer a leadership major.

In this stage of the research, three types of majors were identified (a) majors with the word “leadership” in the title, i.e., “organizational leadership” (b) majors without the word “leadership”, i.e., “agricultural development” and (c) majors offered abroad. The research team chose to focus on the majors with the word “leadership” in the title for the purpose of this study. This narrowed the list of degree programs to 40.

The research team carefully compared curriculum requirements for each of the 40 degree programs. While many schools titled their major as leadership or organizational leadership, it was apparent that these schools were in fact renaming traditional business administration and management programs. If the major included only one, or in many cases, zero leadership based courses, they were also eliminated from the study. After a closer examination of the 40 degree programs using the title(s) of the major that included “leadership,” as well as thorough evaluation of the curriculum, the research team narrowed this list of schools to 15 (see Table 1). However, there could be undergraduate leadership degree programs that were left out due to study limitations.

**Table 1. Colleges and Universities**

Bellevue University	Our Lady of the Lake University
Benedictine University	Peace College
Carroll College	Penn State University
Chapman University	Purdue University
Dominican University	Rockhurst University
Fort Hays State University	University of Richmond
Franklin University	Wright State University
Marietta College	

After narrowing the list, the research team then began collecting program material from the participating schools. In addition to the assessment survey discussed above, the researchers closely examined program materials using the research theme categories. Follow-up email conversations and phone interviews were used to clarify and confirm accuracy of the data. Once collected, data was grouped according to the established research themes. This information was then used in

the creation of a corresponding matrix to effectively display the data for analysis (see Tables 2-7).

Throughout this study, the research team participated in four different levels of analysis when making judgments about the data. Level one analysis consisted of summarizing the information provided by each school independent of other data in the matrix and forming conclusions accordingly. Level two analysis compared and analyzed information horizontally across the matrix within one particular school and produced conclusions based on all available information regarding that school. Level three analysis compared the schools on specific issues (course type, enrollment, etc.) through vertical analysis of the 15 different schools in the matrix. Finally, level four analysis grouped both the horizontal and vertical analysis data together to draw overall conclusions (Creswell, 1998).

## **Findings**

### **School Profile**

Table 2.  
School Profile Matrix

<b>College/University</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Type of University</b>	<b>Undergrad Enrollment</b>	<b>Host College of the Major</b>
Bellevue Univ.	Nebraska	Public	5,524	Arts & Sciences
Benedictine Univ.	Illinois	Private	2,000	Arts & Sciences
Carroll College	Wisconsin	Private	2,100	Professional Studies
Chapman Univ.	California	Private	4,500	Professional Studies
Dominican Univ.	Illinois	Private	2,700	Adult Learning
Fort Hays State Univ.	Kansas	Public	9,000	College of Business & Leadership
Franklin Univ.	Ohio	Private	9,600	School of Management & Leadership
Marietta College	Ohio	Private	1,300	McDonough Center for Leadership & Business
Our Lady of the Lake Univ.	Texas	Private	3,000	
Peace College	N. Carolina	Private	700	
Penn State Univ.	Pennsylvania	Public	40,000	Liberal Arts
Purdue Univ.	Indiana	Public	69,847 (All Campuses)	Technology

Rockhurst Univ.	Missouri	Private	2,500	Professional Studies
Univ. of Richmond	Virginia	Private	2,976	Jepson School of Leadership
Wright State Univ.	Ohio	Public	15,000	Education & Human Services

The findings presented are summaries of the data gathered through the collection procedures. Utilizing the four levels of analyses, the research team assessed, evaluated, and made judgments about the data. Categorized by the research themes, 22 different findings were identified.

1. While most leadership degree programs are found at small private schools, our research tells us that these leadership programs are not limited to a particular type or size of institution (large division one research universities – Purdue and Penn State; small regional public institutions – Bellevue, Fort Hays State, Wright State; and small private schools – Benedictine, Carroll, Chapman, Dominican, Franklin, Marietta, Our Lady of the Lake, Peace, Rockhurst, and Richmond).

2. Most degree programs are located in professional and adult studies programs (Carroll, Chapman, Dominican, and Rockhurst), followed by colleges of arts (Penn State, Bellevue, and Benedictine), and colleges of business and leadership (Fort Hays State, Franklin, and Marietta).

**Leadership Program Profile**

3. The majority of the schools name their major Organizational Leadership (10). Other names used include Leadership (Bellevue), International Leadership Studies (Marietta), Leadership Studies (Peace and Richmond), and Non-Profit Leadership Studies (Rockhurst).

4. Data showed there was very little consistency in which academic department housed the leadership major. For example, Benedictine’s program is in the psychology and sociology department, while at Wright State, the department of education and human services hosts the leadership degree.

5. The credit hour requirements range greatly between the various degree programs (30 credit hours to 71 credit hours).

6. All programs in the study were created between 1993 and 2003. As noted earlier, the leadership major is new to the landscape of the academy.

7. Careers of graduating students from these programs varied greatly. The data showed occupations in government, social service, religion, business, and industry.

Table 3  
Program Profile Matrix

University	# of FTE Faculty	Name of Major	Host Department	Type of Degree	Credit & Additional Requirements	Delivery Options	# of Majors/ Year Started	Typical Students & Career Options	Major Description
Bellevue Univ.	5-Part Time	Leadership		Bachelor of Arts	36 + Electives Must have Associates Degree and 3 years work experience	Both, however primarily degree completion cohort	50/1995	Non-Trad Distance	To give students the theoretical & practical preparation they need to assume positions of leadership.
Benedictine Univ.	1	Org. Leadership	Psychology & Sociology	Bachelor of Arts	39 Open	Adult Learners- Nights & Weekend		Adult	Designed for adults interested in the behavioral perspectives of organizations.
Carroll College	1	Org. Leadership	Business Admin. & Economics	Bachelor of Science	64 Open		10/2001	Traditional On-Campus Student	Program incorporates courses in leadership, business, administration, & politics.
Chapman Univ.	7	Org. Leadership	Leadership & Management	Bachelor of Arts	54 Credits Open Admission	Both	560/1995	Non-Trad distance completion students	Program provides education for & about leadership... emphasizing life & work.
Dominican Univ.	2-Part Time	Org. Leadership	Institute for Adult Learning	Bachelor of Science	42 + Electives Open			Adult Learner	Program designed for leaders who wish to synthesize leading edge concepts with practical experiences.
Fort Hays State Univ.	5 + Part Time	Org. Leadership	Leadership Studies	Bachelor of Arts	33 + Cognates	Both	235/2000	Both trad. On Campus &	Focuses on the study of

				or Science				Adult Distance	leadership in the context of the modern organization.
Franklin Univ.	5	Org. Leadership	School of Management & Leadership	Bachelor of Science	36	Both	80/1995	Trad On Campus	Turning business managers into leaders.
Marietta College	1 + 11 Adjunct	International Leadership Studies	McDonough Center for Business & Leadership	Bachelor of Arts		On Campus	2001	Trad On Campus	The ILS Major offers students an opportunity to study global leadership issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.
Our Lady of the Lake Univ.	6	Org. Leadership	Leadership Studies & Human Sciences	Bachelor of Science	71 Open	Both	90/2002	Industry, Government, Social Service background	Preparing individuals to serve as catalysts for community development & improvement.
Peace College	2	Leadership Studies	Org. Studies	Bachelor of Arts	30/Open Co-Major Requirement	On Campus	45/2001	Traditional on campus	Interdisciplinary in nature & focus on developing leadership knowledge, skill, & attitudes.
Penn State Univ.	10	Org. Leadership	None/ Interdisciplinary	Bachelor of Science	69/Restricted, must meet admission guidelines for students	Both	542/2003	Non-trad distance. Most working full time with business or service background	The program addresses 21st century issues & leadership from different angles.
Purdue Univ.	16 (Multiple Campus)	Org. Leadership & Supervision	Org. Leadership & Supervision	Bachelor of Arts	42/Open	Both	450/1991	Trad on campus Supervision, HRM, Gov., etc.	Emphasis on real world work concepts & principles of leadership over short term supervisory approach.

Rockhurst Univ.	Primarily Adjuncts	Nonprofit Leadership Studies		Bachelor of Prof. Studies	45	On Campus	38	Non-Profit Organizations	Prepares students to serve as leaders of non-profit organizations (social service agencies, hospitals, churches, etc.).
Univ. of Richmond	10	Leadership Studies		Bachelor of Arts	39/Restricted-apply fall semester of sophomore year. Chosen by a number of criteria	On Campus	111/1992	Trad on campus Law, government, business, health care	Critical and ethical leaders who pursue change in organizations & communities.
Wright State Univ.	10	Org. Leadership	College of Education & Human Services	Bachelor of Science	48/Restricted-For students who have completed a 2 year degree	Both (some virtual)	450/2001	Youth leadership, college recruiter, special events manager, outreach director	Degree completion in a management focus, multidisciplinary & application oriented.

**Mission and Purpose**

8. The overwhelming majority of schools describe their leadership major as having a focus on both theory and application.
  
9. Benedictine, Franklin, Penn State, Purdue, and Wright State primarily focus on a civic mission, whereas, Chapman, Dominican, Rockhurst, and Richmond focus on a more organizational theme. Peace, Fort Hays State, Our Lady of the Lake and Carroll describe their missions as including both civic and organizational objectives.
  
10. Participating schools shared little commonality among major scholars who impacted the development of their programs.
  
11. While most programs define and describe leadership as a process of change, there is a stark difference in how that change should be brought about. Some programs focus on the collective (Rockhurst, Peace, Our Lady of the Lake, and Franklin) while others focus on an individual or leader (Richmond, Wright State, and Purdue).
  
12. Several universities in the study focused their learning objectives on cognitive theories (Peace, Richmond, Bellevue, and Benedictine) while others focused on the development of skills and behaviors (Purdue, Rockhurst, Our Lady of the Lake, and Wright State).
  
13. Only five schools reported using service-learning as a pedagogy (Fort Hays State, Marietta, Peace, Rockhurst, and Richmond).

Table 5.  
Mission and Purpose Matrix

<b>University</b>	<b>Theory or Application</b>	<b>Central Theme</b>	<b>Major Scholars</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>
Bellevue Univ.	Both	Prepare students for leadership roles in profit & nonprofit organizations		Lead creative & constructive lives & encourage others to do the same
Benedictine Univ.	Both	Behavioral perspectives in organizations & management. (Social science base)		Deeper understanding of the cultural & personal dynamics in organizations
Carroll College	Application	Three tracks-business, nonprofit, & government		Create new generation of leaders characterized by passion, integrity, & competency

Chapman Univ.	Both	Interdisciplinary & anchored in humanities, social sciences, & communication	Dr. Mark Meyer (founder) & Greenleaf	Develop interpersonal, problem solving, empowering, & critical analysis skills
Dominican Univ.	Both	Incorporates contemporary & holistic courses...focusing on people skills & preparing leaders for global environment		
Fort Hays State Univ.	Both	Social change & organizational development	Joseph Rost & Curt Brungardt	Understanding, competencies, & commitment in leadership
Franklin Univ.	Both	Grasp the newest methods for rapidly changing business (Requires business core)	Advisory board built curriculum	Communicating a vision, developing leader/follower relationships, & supporting the workforce
Marietta College	Both	Practicing leadership in the liberal arts context		Recognize multiple perspectives in problem solving through teamwork & shared vision
Our Lady of the Lake Univ.	Both	Develop successful leaders in business, gov, edu, and non-profit...engage leadership & individual commitment to service		Skills necessary for social change, responsibility, & community development
Peace College	Both	Develop leadership capacity & assume leadership positions		Students will examine philosophy, history, & ethical dynamics to be effective leaders in both workplace & community
Penn State Univ.	Both	Preparing students for leadership in the modern workforce	Ron Filippelli – Associate Dean of Liberal Arts	

Purdue Univ.		Create students who are prepared for leadership in business, industry, & service agencies		Instilling knowledge, skills, & behaviors required of highly effective leaders
Rockhurst Univ.	Both	Preparing leaders in the service of others		Understanding of non-profit sector through human needs, diversity, community service, & skill development
Univ. of Richmond	Both	Multidisciplinary & rooted in the liberal arts	James McGregor Burns	Create students who understand the moral responsibilities of leadership & are prepared for leadership in service to society
Wright State Univ.	Application	Provide students with broad background to prepare for supervisory & management careers	Kotter, Posner & Kouzes, Tichy	Provide students with knowledge, skills, & values necessary for advancement in careers

## Curriculum

Analysis of the curriculum was based on the type of courses, sequence, and the volume of the subject matter. The research team defined and divided courses into six categories which emerged from the data. They include (a) *theories/history* – examination of the leadership theories and the historical foundation; (b) *skills/behaviors* – courses that focus on a particular leadership skill or set of skills (conflict management, strategic planning, decision making, etc.); (c) *context* – courses that study leadership in a particular “context” (organization, business, community, non-profit, etc.); (d) *issue* – courses that directly relate to a specific issue (ethics, gender, law, etc.); (e) *practicum* – usually independent courses like internships that include hands-on experience in leadership; and (f) *support courses* – usually offered by outside departments that support the leadership curriculum.

14. Twelve of the 15 schools offer at least one foundations course. Usually this course is early in the program. Chapman, Franklin, and Marietta offer three courses in the theories and history area. There are fewer courses under this section than the other course types.

15. Fourteen of the 15 programs offer courses in skill development. Thirteen of the 15 offer two or more courses in this area. Richmond, Penn State, Purdue, and Franklin offer at least four courses. The most popular skills courses include general leadership skills, change making, communication, critical inquiry,

motivation, and conflict management. Other courses include decision making, team processing, persuasion, planning, negotiations, professional skills, and policy making.

16. All programs have at least one context course. For most programs this is the largest area in the curriculum. Most programs have at least three or four courses under this heading. The most popular courses included organizational behavior and leadership, groups/teams, society/community, international perspective, business, and social change/movements. Other courses included political, personal, non-profit, and cultural/multicultural courses. Additionally, 13 programs have a course in organizational behavior.

17. There were a total of 42 issue courses in the 15 programs. Many of these courses served as major electives in their respective programs. The most popular included ethics, gender issues, diversity, law and policy, and service and volunteerism. Other courses included supervision, public policy, activism, human resources, and leadership development and training.

18. Most programs include an internship, practicum, or a senior project as part of their curriculum. Usually offered at the senior level, this provides students with real life experiences in leadership. Eleven of the 15 programs have at least one course in this area, and six have at least two or more courses.

19. Most programs also include supporting courses as either core, major electives, or as cognates. These are courses that are usually offered from outside the host department. Thirteen of the 15 programs include supporting courses and seven include two or more. Most of these supporting courses are traditional business, social research methods, statistics, or social psychology. Other courses include public speaking, psychology, technology, and public management.

20. While three host departments teach the overwhelming majority of coursework (Bellevue, Purdue, and Richmond), most programs use coursework from other departments and disciplines to build their curriculum.

21. The research team found that most programs have an even balance between the different types of courses in their program. While curriculum balance may or may not be a goal, most programs do have an even mixture of the different course types.

22. Finally, the research team found that most programs follow a similar course sequence pattern. Usually foundation courses were first, followed by skill, context, and issue courses and generally finished with independent study practicum.

Table 6.  
Curriculum Matrix

University	Theory/History	Skills/Behaviors	Context	Issues
Bellevue Univ.	*Principles	*Leadership Skills *Managing Change *Communication	*Case Studies *Global *Business	*Emotional Intelligence *Ethics
Benedictine Univ.			*Org. Behavior *Org. Analysis *International Business *Business Anthropology *Group Process	*Social & Cultural Change
Carroll College	*Leadership Theory and Practice	*Leading Change	*Small Business *Org. Behavior *Non profit Org. (4)	*Ethics *Research and Development *Critical Issues *Laws
Chapman Univ.	*Intro *History and Theories	*Communication *Critical Inquiry	*Team Development *Understanding Organizations *Multicultural Organizations	*Service Theme *Ethics *Great Leaders *Topics
Dominican Univ.	*The Art of Leadership	*Negotiations *Org. Communication	*Org. Behavior	*Law and Ethics *Org. Promotion
Fort Hays State Univ.	*Concepts	*Behaviors *Supervisory Leadership	*Team Dynamics *Org. Leadership *Personal Development	*Ethics *Women and Leadership
Franklin Univ.	*Theory *Philosophies for Leading	*Strategies for Motivation *Planning *Communication *Negotiation	*Org. Behavior *Small Group/Teams *Self Development	*Special Topics *Business Ethics *Diversity
Marietta College	*Foundations *American Leadership *Theories and Models	*Behavior *Dialogues (styles)	*Org. Leadership *Global Context	*Great Leaders of Latin America *Business Ethics *Science Public Policy *Environmental Activism

Our Lady of the Lake Univ.	*Foundations *History & Theories	*Decision Process *Strategies & Process	*Leadership in Organizations & Society *Community & Political Context *Social Change *Rural & Urban Communities	*Gender Issues *Multi-culturalism *Topics
Peace College	*Foundations	*Leadership Lab *Group Process Lab	*Context of Leadership *Group Process *Social Change *Political Leadership	*Special Topics *Ethics *Leadership Development
Penn State Univ.		*Critical Thinking *Motivation & Work Satisfaction *Speech Communication *Persuasion	*Industry Psychology *Industrial Revolution *Org. Communication *Small Groups *Work & Occupations	*Race & Gender *Ethics *Law & Policy
Purdue Univ.	*Principles *Leadership Philosophy	*Applied Leadership *Meeting Management *Org. Change *Conflict Management	*Human Behavior in Organizations *Teams *Global Environment *Work & Occupation	*HR Issues *Integrity *Quality *Gender/ Development
Rockhurst Univ.		*Admin. of Non-Profit Organizations *Program Planning	*Intro to Non-profit Organizations	*Community Engagement *Volunteer Management

Univ. of Richmond	*Foundations *History & Theories	*Critical Thinking *Motivation *Conflict Resolution *Leading Change *Analysis & Making Policy	*Service to Society *Groups *Leadership in Organizations *Political Context *Social Movements *International Conflict *Community & Volunteer *Cultural & Historical Context	*Ethics
Wright State Univ.	*Leadership Studies	*Professional Skills *Managing Conflict	*Org. Behavior *Urban Leadership *Org. Structure	*HR *Diversity Workforce *Training *Ethics

Table 7.  
Additional Curriculum Matrix

University	Internships	Support	General Comments
Bellevue Univ.	*Capstone Project	*Social Psychology	*All come from Leadership Dept.
Benedictine Univ.		*Org. Research *Management *HR Management *Production & Operation Management *Stats *Social Psychology	*Come from 4 departments - Psychology - Management - Sociology - International *Business
Carroll College	*Internships	*HR Management *Marketing *Management *Stats *Accounting *Economics *Financial Management	*Comes from the Leadership Dept., Business Dept., and Politics Dept.
Chapman Univ.	*Laboratory *Individual Study	*Social Research	

Dominican Univ.		*Accounting *Econ I *Econ II *HR *Marketing *Org. Management *Managing Technology	
Fort Hays State Univ.	*Fieldwork *Internship	*Management *Stats *Business Cognates	*Electives from other Departments
Franklin Univ.	*Capstone	*Psychology	*Also needs Business Core *Electives from other Departments
Marietta College	*Practicum I *Practicum II *Practicum III		
Our Lady of the Lake Univ.		*A Selection of Business Courses *Public Speaking *Selection of Group & Org. Courses *Research & Stats Courses	*Elective, Core, & Cognates from other Departments *71 hours
Peace College	*Context Lab *Self in Community *Capstone/Personal Portfolio *Internship		*Electives from other Departments
Penn State Univ.		*Research Methods *Stats *Information Technology *Economics	*Courses from many Departments
Purdue Univ.	*Experiential	*Project Management	*One Department
Rockhurst Univ.	*Practicum *Professional Field Experience	*Marketing *Finance	
Univ. of Richmond	*Internships *Senior Seminar *Senior Project I & II	*Research Methods	*One Department
Wright State Univ.	*Leadership in Practice	*History of Management *Research in Management *Public Management	

**Summary of Findings**

In many ways this study has provided the research team with more questions than answers. The research, while limited in scope, does provide the discipline of leadership with its first examination of the leadership major. Do these leadership degree programs share a common framework? Are there patterns of uniformity and consistency? The answer to these questions and the results of our research are definitely mixed at best. While these pioneer programs have differences in mission, philosophy, and learning objectives, it is surprising the similarities found in the various curricula.

This study recognized six notable differences in the research themes. First, the schools with leadership majors are not limited to a particular type or size of institution. Second, there is little consistency on the host division or academic department of the leadership major. Third, the total number of credit hours for the major varied greatly. Fourth, there was a stark difference between the degree programs that focused on a civic mission versus those who promote an organizational leadership objective. Next, we found little evidence that the architects of these programs were impacted by the same scholars in the field. Finally, there is also a difference between the leadership major curricula that focus on the theoretical and those that focus more on skill development.

Despite these contradictions the various leadership majors also have some similarities. Most of the commonality is found in the curriculum area research theme. For example, all programs talk about the importance of balancing both theory and practical applications of leadership. Next, most degrees include coursework in theories, skills, context, issues, practicum, and other support areas. Skills and behavior courses focus mostly on general skills, change making, communication, and conflict management. Context courses most often include organizational behavior and team/group dynamics type courses, while the most popular issue courses focus on ethics, gender, diversity, and service. Finally, the research team found that most programs had a balance between these courses and followed a logical sequence.

### **Conclusion: A Call to Action**

When examining this research, we must be cautious in that the material presented here only scratches the surface of a complex issue. It is our belief that this study does, however, provide a good beginning for understanding the similarities and differences between the various leadership majors. Most importantly, this study is a good starting point for collaboration and further research. This collaboration is critical if the leadership major is to ever become accepted as an academic discipline in higher education.

The research team suggests further exploration. More assessment data should be obtained from the 15 schools identified in this study. Further examination of leadership graduates in the workforce would provide needed evidence to strengthen the leadership major. In addition, further research into all other

categories of leadership programming not covered in this study may provide additional credibility. Combined, these studies could contribute to enhanced assessment instruments to be used across varied leadership contexts.

We recognize that it will take some time to construct the building blocks of a standardized leadership major. Current and future program architects will need to share information and seek opportunities for open discussion on these critical issues (Mangan, 2002). We encourage others to move beyond this study in the hopes of advancing this new, emerging academic major.

In closing, we as leadership educators must become much more intentional in our collaboration. We are so busy being “lone rangers” in the field that we fail to practice what we preach. We, like so many others in organizational life, talk the talk of collaboration, but fail to walk it. Until we work together and agree on common ground in teaching students historical, theoretical, and practical foundations and applications of leadership, we will struggle to gain credibility or make the case for leadership as a credible major. Furthermore, we are doing leadership graduates a disservice by not working together to create a cohesive framework within which to unify our efforts.

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## **Biography**

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