

## PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH:

### Modeling the Way for Students by Developing Faculty and Staff as Leaders

#### Abstract

When our students told us they wanted our faculty and staff to practice the leadership competencies that we were outlining in our university's leadership competency model, we decided to take on the challenge. Based on principles of effective leadership development, the College of Business and Office of Human Resources created and continue to refine a leadership development program for faculty and staff at the University. This article describes the development of this program and how it has grown over the past few years to model the way for our students.

"We don't just want you to teach us about great leadership, we want you to practice it." This was the message our students had for us in multiple focus groups we were conducting, as part of our effort to develop our university's competency model. They told us they wanted our university's faculty and staff to practice the leadership competencies that we were discussing. We had not expected to hear this. We had not expected them to challenge us to put into practice the competencies that we were trying to develop in them. Nonetheless, they were right; and we decided to take on the challenge. As a result, based on principles of effective leadership development, the College of Business and Office of Human Resources created and continue to refine a leadership development program for faculty and staff at the University that was adapted from the same model we use in student leadership development. This article describes the why leadership development professionals need to model the way for those they are seeking to develop and outlines how we created our leadership development series for faculty

and staff and how it has been adapted over the past few years to strive to practice what we preach.

#### Introduction

When it comes to leadership, we learn as much by example as we do through instruction (Prince II, 1995; Zenger, 2013). Indeed, we probably learn more about how to lead from the examples of those that lead us than we do from what they teach us. Consequently, it should not have been a surprise to our leadership team when, in the process of conducting focus groups with students to identify necessary leadership competencies, they vociferously declared "We don't just want to be told how to lead, we want faculty and staff to be examples of the leadership they teach us." What the students were saying was that they wanted us to walk the talk of leadership.

We had never thought of developing faculty and staff as leaders in order to help them, by example, to

develop in the same way. However, as a result of these students' declarations our taskforce, which had been charged with developing a leadership competency model at our university, expanded our efforts beyond student education and development to include a focus on strengthening administrative leadership and strengthening the institutions leadership culture. Our goal was to respond to the plea from our students that we practice the leadership we were preaching to them.

## Modeling the Way

In their book on leadership, Kouzes and Posner (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) explored the peak experiences of leaders across the world. They found that one of the fundamental elements of great leadership was a willingness to model the way. They wrote, "If you want others to believe in something and behave according to those beliefs, you have to set the example by being personally involved" (p. 316). They argued that to achieve this ideal, leaders must first clarify their values and then align their actions with these espoused values. In doing so, they establish and communicate a sense of integrity that becomes foundational for building trust (Butler & Cantrell, 1984; Schoorman et al., 2007).

This need to model the way by practicing the values one preaches as a leader is not just about increasing trust and integrity. It is also critical to leadership development. Because, leadership is learned as much through observation and imitation as it is from formal instruction. Indeed, social learning theory suggests that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling" (Bandura, 1977, p. 22). According to Bandura, as one observes others, "one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22). Wood and Bandura (1989) further argued that, "virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experience can occur vicariously

by observing people's behavior and the consequences of it" (p. 362). In a study examining how senior police officers learned to be leaders, Tang (2015) found, "The participants improved their leadership skills by learning from their senior officers, mainly through observation" even though there was evidence that they did not seek advice directly from these leaders (p. 119). Additional research has suggested that parental leadership influences the leadership styles espoused and practiced among young people (Allen, 2007). Thus, individuals learn much of their approach to leadership through informal observation and mimicry of those that lead them. While this largely occurs unintentionally, there is evidence that it can be intentional as well.

Within the context of education, there is evidence that instructors' intentional modeling of leadership practices can effectively contribute to leadership learning among students (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Parks, 2005). The importance of this kind of learning is significant among leadership educators because, "social learning emphasizes the need for leaders or teachers to exemplify the desired behavior" that they want followers to develop (Allen, 2007). In his research regarding the lived experience of leadership educators, Jenkins (2019) found that most leadership educators largely "learned on the job and few had terminal degrees in leadership" (p. 152) and "a significant part of their work involved modeling the way and walking the talk" (p. 151). Furthermore, the way educators engage their students as classroom leaders models the way for their students as leaders (Jenkins & Sowcik, 2014) and sets "standards" for others with regards to their approaches to leadership (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). As a result, students are able to not only learn from their own experience, but also from the experiences and "mistakes of others" (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). As Huber (2002) declared, "our purpose as leadership educators includes modeling lifelong learning values and practices" (p. 27). The same can be said of the role of academic

advisors and other educators. As McClellan (2013) explained,

By both modeling and tutoring students in relation to effective communication, time management, the conducting of effective meetings, self and other motivation, coaching, decision-making, planning, and the other leadership competencies, [advisors] can both directly and indirectly assist students to develop leadership skills. (p. 224)

Facilitating this kind of social learning process is essential if universities wish to fulfill their missions within the modern context of higher education.

## Leadership Development

One of the most important roles of universities, in the 21st century, is to contribute to the development of students as engaged citizens or leaders who can make contributions in the professional, personal, and social roles they play following graduation (Chan, 2016; Komives & Sowcik, 2020). In order to achieve this goal, it is important that universities implement intentional and structured programs and processes dedicated to leadership education and development (Downing, 2020; Oberg & Andenoro, 2019).

As London and Maurer (2004) explained, "At the individual level, leadership development requires self-insight to understand one's strengths and weaknesses and organizational requirements and to set goals for development" (p. 230). In addition, it also "involves self-regulation in establishing learning goals and action plans" (London & Maurer, 2004, p. 230). Furthermore, "it implies the development of a strong self-identity in terms of the type of person one is and wants to be and the career goals one wants to achieve" (London & Maurer, 2004, p. 230). Thus, leadership development requires intentional and focused efforts to develop leaders within the contexts in which they will be leading. There are many models and approaches that have been advocated for accomplishing these tasks.

According to Lawson (2008) writing on behalf of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), which is now known as the Association for Talent Development (ATD), There are three basic stages involved in establishing a leadership development program. First, one must conduct a needs analysis. There are a series of 5 essential steps in this process. The first involves identifying and understanding the organizational context; or, more specifically, the mission, business environment, and strategy of the organization. This includes determining the level within the organization at which leadership training will occur.

The second step involves identifying the desired outcomes of training. Lawson (2008) suggested that such outcomes "must state the desired performance or behavior and be measurable, observable, realistic, and fixable" (p. 37). In addition, these should be tied to the "organizational goals" (Lawson, 2008, p. 37). The author further suggested collecting this initial data through conversations with upper management. The third step involves collecting additional data to validate the information acquired through these discussions. This data may be collected via questionnaires, instruments, interviews, and other sources of existing information.

Once this data is collected, the fourth step is to analyze the data to identify the themes that should be addressed in the development program. Having done this, step five involves seeking feedback regarding the results of the previous four steps to insure alignment with the needs of key stakeholders and assuring high level leadership commitment to the program (Lawson, 2008).

Once the objectives of the program have been identified, the focus then shifts to the program design phase (Lawson, 2008). This stage generally involves clear articulation of outcomes, followed by determining the appropriate training methods and the means of assessing these outcomes. Once this design phase is complete, intentional implementation and regular review of the assessment results are done to insure effectiveness and ongoing improvement of

the program This basic approach for designing and developing leadership programs is consistent across most of the literature on leadership development (Yearout et al., 2001).

## Developing a Leadership Competency Model

One of the common approaches for identifying leadership outcomes and objectives for development programs is to create a leadership competency model (Kolditz, 2007; McCauley et al., 2010; Zenger & Folkman, 2002). While there is some debate as to the utility of such models, they are widely used and can be used effectively to develop leaders (Hollenbeck et al., 2006). As indicated above such models should be developed based on a variety of inputs and focused on the organizational context in which the development will take place and those contexts in which it will be applied.

In order to do this, a leadership team was established from across our institution that included faculty, staff, and administrators from each college and the curricular and co-curricular programs that

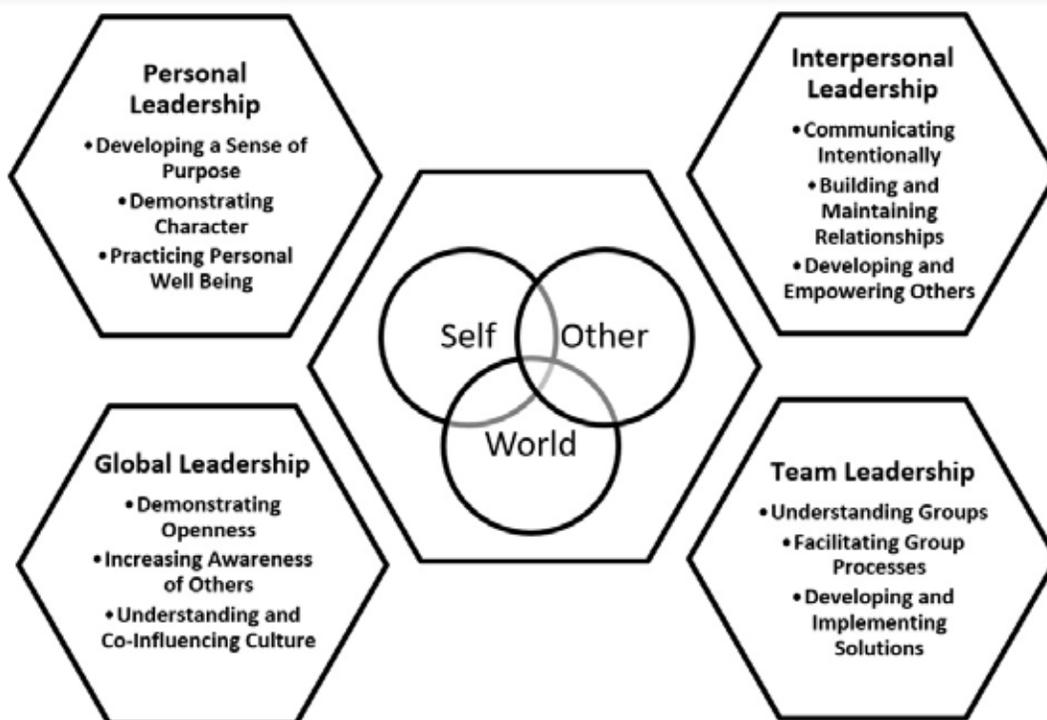
promote leadership development. From this larger group, a smaller leadership team was established to drive the leadership change process. This team reviewed research regarding the leadership needs in society based on documents such as:

- The SCANS report on achieving necessary skills, an article on global leadership needs (Cohen, 2010),
- The Association of American Colleges and Universities' LEAP report (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and Americas Promise, 2007),
- CAS standards for leadership programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2011)
- Information on basic leadership models and approaches (Roberts, 2007).

The group then conducted a series of focus groups with key stakeholders across the university "to identify the core development needs of students relative to achieving success in a global environment, as well as within their roles on the campus" (Baer

**Figure 1**

*University Competency Model*



& McClellan, 2014). The results of these dialogues were aligned with the research and organized into a competency model that was vetted by the larger group and then the campus community in a series of follow up discussion forums. The resulting document (see Figure 1) was finalized with feedback from all stakeholders. Since then, it has been used to design selection, development, and assessment processes for leadership programs within the institution. This is generally where such efforts stop. However, consistent with the request of students, the leadership of the group then focused their efforts on using the model as a foundation for developing a leadership development series for faculty and staff.

## Adapting the Model

In order to adapt the model to meet the development needs of faculty and staff, it became evident that some additional competencies would need to be added to address the administrative and leadership roles of faculty and staff at the university. Consequently, a group of individuals from the College of Business and the Human Resource office came together and, using performance evaluation data from the university, selected a group of high performing administrators and leaders. These individuals were then asked to participate in two focus groups to explore effective leadership behaviors and practices that allowed them to achieve success.

In these focus groups, they were asked to identify the key leadership practices, skills, and behaviors that

**Figure 2**

### *Organizational Leadership Competencies*

Organizational Leadership	
Perform Administrative Duties	Engaging effectively in administrative tasks such as budgeting, hiring, training, performance management, etc.
Organize the workplace to achieve Results	Engage in effective strategic planning, project and resource management, and assessment
Lead Organizational Change	Demonstrating the ability to develop and carry out a change-oriented project
Think Systemically and Politically	Demonstrating an understanding of the leadership environment and the ability to lead within it. Includes developing skill in systems thinking, political action, cultural awareness and leadership, structural design, and people management.
Demonstrate Professional Expertise	Demonstrating the appropriate knowledge and skill within ones professional domain

contributed to their success at the institution. The results of the focus groups were collected and coded. These were then aligned, where appropriate, with the competencies in the original competency model. For example, “being open and accepting of feedback” and “being flexible” were aligned with “demonstrating openness”.

The remaining comments, those that did not fit within the existing model, were organized into themes and used to identify additional competencies. The result was the inclusion of a new competency area within

the model entitled organizational leadership (see Figure 2).

Having identified this new area, along with its five core competencies, these results were vetted with the original focus group participants to validate their inclusion as relevant competencies of effective leadership within the university. The validation of these made it possible to include them as part of the effort to promote leadership development among faculty and staff.

## Training Program Design

Having identified appropriate organizational leadership competencies, these were then developed into specific learning outcomes, which were then used to design the leadership development process. In order to do this, the outcomes were organized around specific themes and used to develop a

structure for the overall development program. This structure consisted of monthly half-day leadership development sessions (see figure 3).

Because one of the goals of the program was to promote greater awareness of the roles of different departments and divisions and to focus on application of knowledge, each day was designed to conclude

**Figure 3**

*Annual Schedule of Sessions*

Fall Semester			
September	October	November	December
<b>Topic: Leadership and Systems Thinking</b>	<b>Topic: Personal leadership at FSU</b>	<b>Topic: Interpersonal Leadership at FSU</b>	<b>Topic: Group/Team leadership</b>
Outcomes: Participants will: 1) Demonstrate an understanding of leadership 2) Recognize the importance of context and culture in relation to leadership 3) Practice systems thinking 4) Increase their understanding of organizations as structural, human, political and cultural environments	Outcomes: Participants will 1) Identify their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and approaches to leadership 2) Develop and articulate a personal leadership philosophy 3) Recognize and develop a plan for managing the stresses associated with leadership	Outcomes: Participants will: 1) Understand human motivation 2) Increase their capacity to develop and maintain effective leader-follower relations 3) Improve their skill in intentional communication 4) Develop a plan for empowering employees	Outcomes: Participants will: 1) Learn the characteristics of effective teams 2) Develop a plan for transforming their work groups into teams 3) Be able to conduct effective meetings 4) Manage conflict effectively
Institutional Area: Frostburg State University Overview	Institutional Areas: Academic Affairs	Institutional Area: University Foundation	Institutional Area: OHR
Spring Semester			
January	February	March	April
<b>Topic: Organizing the workplace</b>	<b>Topic: Performing Administrative Duties</b>	<b>Topic: Multicultural and Global Leadership</b>	<b>Topic: Leading Change</b>
Outcomes: Participants will 1) Develop skill in strategic planning and organization	Outcomes: Participants will: 1) Learn skills in budgeting and finance at a University 2) Develop a hiring and training plan 3) Practice coaching and performance management including handling difficult conversations	Outcomes: participants will 1) Demonstrate an understanding of culture 2) Increase their empathy for and understanding of cultural differences 3) Develop increased cultural intelligence	Outcomes: Participants will 1) Learn principles of effective change leadership 2) Develop a plan for leading change within their role at the FSU 3) Develop a plan for ongoing growth and development as a leader
Institutional Area: SES	Institutional Area: Admin/Finance	Institutional Area: USM/Legislature	Institutional Area: Enrollment Management

with a panel of administrators from different areas. These panelists provide insights regarding their roles, work, and challenges, and how they apply the principles of leadership to their daily efforts. The initial schedule for each session was 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, followed by a half hour lunch and a panel discussion concluding at 1:30 pm.

In addition to these panels, the annual development series begins with an opening orientation that includes introductions to the program, keynote

speakers who present on leadership and effective leadership in higher education. This orientation also addresses business matters with regards to the participation in the program. It generally takes place either just before or just after the fall semester begins each year.

## Program Content Development

Once the program structure was designed, the

content for each session was developed. This was accomplished by reaching out to faculty and staff experts from across the university and inviting them to develop content and contribute as ongoing faculty for the series. These experts were given an initial one-time stipend to develop the content for their 3-hour sessions. All those who were initially invited to participate, accepted and contributed to this effort to strengthen faculty and staff leadership at the University.

## Assessment

In order to assess the program's effectiveness, individual session feedback surveys were developed based on the outcomes for each session. In addition, pre and post self-assessments were developed and used. Members of the steering committee attend each session and observe, seek feedback from participants, and provide feedback of their own. Once a month, the committee meets to review the surveys

**Table 1.**

*Strategic Planning Competency Results*

Not at all	Very Little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	To a great extent
0%	0%	8%	21%	50%	21%

Similarly, positive results have been found for the majority of the competencies. The overall results for each of these individual competencies are summarized in table 2:

**Table 2.**

*Session Level Competencies*

Competency	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	To a great extent
Demonstrate an understanding of leadership	0%	0%	11%	18%	43%	27%
Recognize the importance of context and culture in relation to leadership	0%	2%	0%	30%	41%	27%
Practice systems thinking	0%	0%	9%	30%	32%	30%
Increase their understanding of organizations as structural, human, political and cultural environments	0%	0%	7%	9%	39%	45%
Identify their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and approaches to leadership	0%	0%	9%	17%	41%	33%
Develop and articulate a personal leadership philosophy	0%	0%	11%	24%	43%	22%
Recognize and develop a plan for managing the stresses associated with leadership	0%	4%	18%	31%	22%	24%
Understand human motivation	0%	0%	21%	29%	26%	24%
Increase their capacity to develop and maintain effective leader-follower relations	0%	3%	12%	35%	24%	26%
Improve their skill in intentional communication	3%	3%	15%	21%	32%	26%
Develop a plan for empowering employees	3%	0%	18%	21%	33%	24%
Learn the characteristics of effective teams	0%	4%	15%	31%	35%	15%

Competency	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	To a great extent
Develop a plan for transforming their work groups into teams	4%	4%	31%	27%	19%	15%
Be able to conduct effective meetings	4%	15%	31%	12%	23%	15%
Manage conflict effectively	8%	0%	19%	38%	27%	8%
Develop skill in strategic planning and organization	0%	0%	8%	21%	50%	21%
Learn skills in budgeting and finance at a University	0%	4%	29%	13%	25%	29%
Develop a hiring and training plan	4%	8%	25%	4%	29%	29%
Practice coaching and performance management including handling difficult conversations	0%	0%	29%	17%	21%	33%
Handling difficult conversations	0%	4%	21%	29%	17%	29%
Demonstrate an understanding of culture	13%	0%	19%	25%	25%	19%
Increase their empathy for and understanding of cultural differences	13%	6%	13%	13%	25%	31%
Develop increased cultural intelligence	13%	6%	13%	19%	31%	19%
Learn principles of effective change leadership	0%	0%	11%	33%	44%	11%
Develop a plan for leading change within your role	0%	0%	17%	39%	39%	6%

As is evident, the overall self-evaluation results indicate a high level of perceived growth in relation to the competencies. Nonetheless, several modules did not score as well overall. Feedback from written responses suggested areas for improvement. As a result, three of the presenters were changed to provide more appropriate content and approaches for participants. In some cases, outcomes were realigned to ensure that too much content was not being covered for the time allotted. In addition, the amount of time allocated to sessions was extended

from 3 hours to 4. The outcome results were monitored to ensure that scores improved. One example of such improvement relates to the third session on interpersonal leadership. After the first couple of cohorts, the evaluations suggested that this session was not as effective as other sessions. As a result, a change in the presenter was made and the content was revised. This led to an improvement in the outcome results for this session (see Table 3). The lower scores observed occurred in the first session with the new presenter. However, with some

**Table 3.**  
*Change in response to relationship outcomes for session 2*

Presenter	Not at all	Very Little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	To a great extent
Before change in presenter	0	0	5	3	6	2
	0%	0%	31%	19%	38%	13%
Post change in presenter	0	2	7	3	6	19
	0%	5%	19%	8%	16%	51%

modifications, the lower scores were eliminated in the sessions that followed. This is one example of many that suggests that the outcomes assessment and review processes have continuously helped in developing and improving the program at an individual session level.

The quantitative and qualitative assessment results that focus on individual sessions are complemented by assessment processes for the overall program. For example, a couple of years ago, a post assessment was added wherein supervisors discuss the impact they have seen the program have on their employees. To date, all feedback has been positive. The supervisors have reported increases in understanding of how the university operates, increased leadership skills, and an expanded network of peers for their employees within the university environment.

In addition to the outcomes-oriented improvements mentioned previously, a mentor program was established a few years back to connect members of the cohort with established and experienced administrators and faculty leaders, many of whom are now former cohort members. These mentors meet with current cohort participants to discuss their careers and how they are applying the principles they are learning to their work.

Based on a request from cohort members, the committee began to identify ways to involve graduating cohort members in leadership opportunities that elevate their roles on campus. Thus, the HR office has specifically sought to involve former cohort members in leadership committees within their office, they now serve on the oversight team for the series and the HR professional development committee, and to

encourage their inclusion on committees and work groups outside of HR. These efforts, along with the other elements of the program, have strengthened the program and the university's overall leadership while breaking down silos and promoting cross functional understanding. This has strengthened the leadership culture at Frostburg and made it a place that is more prone to model effective leadership for students.

## Limitations

While the program has been successful in many ways, there are limitations that hinder effectiveness. First and foremost, the program has never been fully funded by the university. The HR office has reallocated budget funds from different areas each year and sought and received funds through grants and from other departments. This has allowed the program to continue from year to year but has hindered success given the lack of solid funding for the program.

Second, the program depends heavily on academic faculty to provide the training for the program. While academic faculty are content experts, there is a tendency for some to emphasize lecture over more participative and active learning approaches. In addition, many have limited experience in the administrative leadership work in which the participants are engaged. Finally, the assessment processes heavily emphasize the first two levels of training program evaluation as described in Kirkpatrick's model: reaction and learning (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). See Figure 4 for a summary of these levels.

**Figure 4**

*The Four Levels*

Level 1: Reaction	The degree to which participants find the training favorable, engaging and relevant to their jobs
Level 2: Learning	The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the training
Level 3: Behavior	The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job
Level 4: Results	The degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training and the support and accountability package

and feedback received and to suggest improvements. Each year, feedback is sought from the cohort to examine ways to improve the program as well.

In general, the outcomes assessments have been very positive and infer that the desired outcomes are being achieved. For example, the primary focus of session five is on developing skill in relation to strategic planning. Participants are asked to identify to what extent they feel their knowledge, skill and understanding in relation to this competency has increased as a result of completing the session. Over 90%, throughout the duration of the program, have indicated that they feel they have increased in a relatively significant way in relation to this competency (see Table 1).

To improve assessment processes and determine the true efficacy of the program, additional effort needs to be placed on deepening the assessment processes to explore outcomes at the behavioral and results levels. While some efforts have been made to do this, by getting feedback from supervisors for example. Additional effort could be made to assess direct outcomes of the program at these levels. Finally, based on feedback, we have considered implementing a project based, action learning element to the program (Revens, 1977; Rothwell, 1999). However, the workload of the participants involved in the program has kept us from doing so. Nonetheless, this would likely strengthen the program and make it more effective overall. These limitations aside, the program has largely achieved its intended outcomes.

## Conclusion

In response to the request from students that the University, as part of its efforts to develop students as leaders, model the same leadership the institution wished to encourage students to develop, the HR office and the College of Business collaborated to design, develop, and implement a leadership development series for faculty and staff. Leadership educators and development experts who wish to

develop similar programs may benefit from using some similar processes to those incorporated in this program.

To begin with, program developers should design the program based on effective leadership development theories and practices. They should incorporate key stakeholders from across the institution in the design process. Furthermore, processes should focus not only on the development of administrative and faculty leaders, but also on the development of leaders so they can model the way for students. Maintaining this emphasis is important as it frames the purpose of the program within the context of the overall mission of a university: to educate students.

Part of achieving this focus involves correlating student leadership learning outcomes and competencies with those ultimately used to develop administrative and faculty leaders as part of the program. These outcomes and competencies should be based on those used by effective practitioners within the institution and be supported by research on effective leadership. Assessment practices should be intentionally designed to examine individual session and overall program results based on the four levels outlined by Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016) and should be monitored on an ongoing basis. Based on the results of these assessments, changes should be made to strengthen the program to better achieve the desired outcomes. Where possible, we recommend practitioner scholars as facilitators for the program who emphasize application through engaged learning practices. Programs should encourage and facilitate networking among participants as this has proved to be one of the most valued aspects of the program. Finally, mentoring may prove effective as a means of broadening and deepening networking opportunities, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and encouraging deeper learning and leadership practice at the institution.

Following these practices has proven valuable for our institution as the results of the program have been positive for faculty and staff. Those who have

participated in the program have grown as leaders and should now be better able to model that leadership for students. While it would be difficult to measure the extent to which these efforts have contributed to student leadership development, we believe that strengthening the leadership of administrators and faculty is having the effect of educating students by example.

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