

## **Leadership Studies At a Historically Black, Liberal Arts College: The Intersection of Leadership Theory, History, and the African American Cultural Experience**

### 1) Presenter Information

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### 2) Title of Presentation

“Leadership Studies At a Historically Black, Liberal Arts College: The Intersection of Leadership Theory, History, and the African American Cultural Experience”

### 3) Presentation Track - Practice

### 4) Presentation Description

This presentation shares the design, implementation, and current status of an undergraduate interdisciplinary leadership studies minor at Morehouse College. The focus of the minor is two-fold: 1) theoretical and historical foundations of leadership studies; and 2) critical ethical leadership challenges that impact civil society with special emphasis on issues as they relate to African Americans.

### 5) Presenter’s Biographical Profile

Belinda Johnson White is an Assistant Professor, Leadership Studies, at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia. She earned a PhD in Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University, a MS, Georgia Institute of Technology, and a BS, Spelman College. She teaches leadership theory and history in the Leadership Studies Minor and courses in leadership and professional development in the Morehouse College business program. Belinda serves as program coordinator for the Leadership Studies Minor, a curriculum she co-developed during her two-year tenure as the Associate Director of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College. Other leadership development activities include being the founding director of the Morehouse College Executive Mentorship Program and a faculty mentor for the Morehouse College International Spring Tour. Outside of work, Belinda enjoys spending time with her family and lending her leadership expertise to her church and community service projects.

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**Introduction**

Over the past two decades, leadership studies has become a growing interdisciplinary field in American higher education. In 1987, the University of Richmond, through a multi-million dollar gift, embarked upon the establishment of the nation's first undergraduate school of leadership studies, The Jepson School of Leadership Studies, with an interdisciplinary curriculum rooted in the liberal arts (University of Richmond website). At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, numerous other colleges and universities have formalized the study of leadership at both undergraduate and graduate levels through majors, minors, or selected course offerings. Recently Doh (2003) reported findings that state more than three fifths of the top 50 U.S. business schools offer some course-work in leadership. Clearly colleges and universities that strive to be the best of the best are leading the way in providing formalized academic course offerings in leadership studies. This trend is the impetus for a leadership studies minor at Morehouse College.

Ranked twice as the number one college in the nation for educating African American students by Black Enterprise magazine (Morehouse College website), Morehouse College is the nation's largest, private liberal arts college for African American men. Founded in 1867, Morehouse enjoys a long standing tradition of excellence in leadership development. The College states as its primary mission the development of men with disciplined minds who will lead lives of leadership, service, and self-realization (Morehouse College 2000-2001 Catalog).

In 2002, Morehouse College saw the need to strengthen and enhance its leadership development initiatives and added the study of leadership as an academic subject matter through the implementation of a 15 hour interdisciplinary leadership studies minor. Although not the first college to offer a minor in leadership studies, Morehouse College, an HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), felt the need to distinguish its offering from those of traditional colleges in two ways: 1) by incorporating the African American heritage and experience into the design and delivery of its leadership studies

program; and 2) challenging students' awareness of the critical ethical leadership issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as they relate to African American life and culture. In contrast to leadership programs at other HBCUs which focus on skills, (Hampton University website), the Morehouse College program focuses on issues.

This paper highlights the Morehouse College interdisciplinary leadership studies minor program and its emphasis on the African American heritage and experience and 21<sup>st</sup> century ethical leadership issues by discussing 1) the goal and objectives of the leadership studies curriculum; 2) the leadership studies curriculum design; and 3) the leadership studies minor core course descriptions. The paper concludes with program results to date and implications for the future.

### **Program Background, Goal and Objectives**

The Leadership Studies (LS) Minor is a program of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College and the Division of Business and Economics. It was designed during the 2000-2001 academic year by an 11-member, interdisciplinary faculty committee, under the leadership of the Executive Director and Associate Director of the Leadership Center.

The goal of the Morehouse College Leadership Studies Minor Curriculum is to prepare students to explore critical ethical leadership issues that impact civil society with special emphasis on issues as they relate to African Americans, their heritage, and their cultural experience.

Accomplished through a rigorous, interdisciplinary academic course of study, the objectives of the LS Minor are to prepare students to:

- Think critically about the relationship between knowledge, values, and the practice of leadership;
- Serve effectively in formal and informal leadership roles in diverse settings;
- Apply modes of inquiry and knowledge bases from many disciplines to the study and practice of leadership with particular emphasis on science and technology, humanities and the social sciences, and business and economics;
- Retrieve, examine, and when desirable and necessary, reinterpret leadership practices that have historically marked African American life and culture;
- Understand the personal and public roles of leadership in an increasingly diverse and global world;
- Discern, deliberate, and decide on appropriate strategies for action and change directed by values of courage, justice, and compassion;
- Develop adaptive strategies that promote teamwork and cooperation;
- Imagine worthwhile visions of the future and inspire others to join in bringing about change when desirable and necessary; and
- Continue their development as leaders by self-directed, life-long learning.

## Curriculum Design

In order to achieve the goal and objectives outlined above, the LS Minor was designed as a 15 hour curriculum comprised of three leadership studies courses (nine hour core), and two elective courses (six hours) to be selected by the students from a predetermined list of LS Minor electives.

The nine-hour core contains three (3) courses which must be completed sequentially. They are 1) LS 101, Foundations of Leadership; 2) LS 201, History and Theories of Leadership; and 3) the capstone course, LS 301, Ethical Leadership and African American Moral Traditions. Courses that may be selected as electives are found in each of the three College Divisions, which are Business and Economics, Science and Mathematics, and Social Sciences and Humanities. The electives may be taken at any point after the student has completed LS 101. Students are required to take one elective from each division outside of their major division. This requirement reinforces the interdisciplinary design of the LS minor.

### Leadership Studies Minor Core Courses

LS 101- Foundations of Leadership - Foundations of Leadership explores the broad and diverse literature of leadership studies and emphasizes the relationship between theory and leadership practice, and the moral and civic responsibilities of leadership. The course seeks to critically examine prominent theories and practices of leadership in context and to evaluate the competencies traditionally associated with the field. The fundamental theories and concepts that are studied include trait, situationalist, transactional, transformational, adaptive, and servant-leadership models.

The course also focuses on the practical aspects of leadership which are developed by learning and observing the skills, practices, and activities of effective leadership identified by leadership scholars. For example, students become familiar with the interpersonal and technical skills that are needed for effective communication, conflict resolution, change management, decision-making, group development, motivation, and policy making/implementation. The textbook utilized in the course is *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience* (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2006).

As a result of completing LS 101, the student should 1) become comfortable with the concept of leadership; 2) recognize the various theories of leadership; 3) have a working knowledge of the process of leadership; 4) demonstrate an increased awareness of the practice of leadership; 5) have a clear sense of the purposes of leadership; 6) have developing awareness of his strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and be able to articulate a personal approach to leadership; and 7) have an enhanced understanding of concepts and practices involved in leadership in a diverse society.

LS 201 - History and Theories of Leadership - History and Theories of Leadership broadly and inclusively explores theories of leadership in historical context and demonstrates how ideology and culture provide environments that produce different views of leadership and demand different styles of leadership. The course examines and

evaluates competencies traditionally associated with leadership in varying historical and cultural contexts while reinforcing the theoretical dimensions of leadership with an emphasis on contemporary theories and models.

The course is designed as an "intellectual history" of leadership, allowing the student to come away with an enhanced understanding of the richness and diversity of the field of leadership studies. The course explores a wealth of differing sources and approaches to leadership, including ancient mythology, classic philosophy, literature, history, social, business, and scientific theories of leadership. The material is integrated in such a way that each perspective falls logically into an understandable pattern of evolving conceptions of leadership over time. The textbook utilized in the course is *The Leader's Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages* (Wren, 1995).

As a result of completing LS 201 the student should 1) demonstrate a general working knowledge of the "intellectual history" of leadership; 2) recognize and understand major interpretive frameworks of leadership; 3) appreciate differing perspectives in the field of leadership studies; 4) be able to apply the major interpretive frameworks of leadership to real-life situations; and 5) devise his own conceptual approach to the subject based on his creative engagement with major thinkers and movements in leadership studies.

LS 301 - Ethical Leadership and African American Moral Traditions - Ethical Leadership and African American Moral Traditions, the capstone course in the LS Minor, examines African American leadership in historical and cultural context and the competencies traditionally associated with African American leadership practices, while evaluating the role of ethical leadership in addressing the issues and challenges facing 21<sup>st</sup> century African American leaders. Three specific areas of ethical leadership are emphasized: morally-anchored character, transformative acts of civility, and a sense of community.

Utilizing a narrative pedagogy, LS 301 acquaints students with major figures, movements, and issues in black American spiritual and ethical traditions. This intermediate seminar focuses heavily on leadership emerging from 19th and 20th century black culture, explores theoretical concerns within respective traditions, and offers a forum for practical engagement with contemporary problems associated with African American life and culture. Two textbooks are used in the class, *Uplifting the Race* (Gaines, 2002) and *The Stones that the Builders Rejected* (Fluker, 1995). Secondary source material in the form of readings from and about significant African American writers, thinkers, and leaders are also used. These prominent figures include Harold Cruse, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Anna Julia Cooper, Darlene Clark Hines, Peter Paris, Marable Manning, and Cornel West.

As a result of completing LS 301, the student should 1) demonstrate an understanding of the historical underpinnings of moral traditions that have nurtured leaders in African American life and practice; 2) demonstrate an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of the study of leadership within an ethical framework, i.e. utilizing disciplines of human and social sciences, philosophy, theology, ethics, and the arts; 3) demonstrate an appreciation of the place of narratives and stories that illumine historical, religious, ideological, and cultural antecedents in African American leadership; and 4) demonstrate

an ability to identify key leaders and movements that have shaped the context and meaning for African American life and culture.

### **Results to Date**

The LS Minor curriculum was approved by the College faculty in Spring 2001. The first offering of LS 101, Foundations of Leadership, occurred in Spring 2002, with 5 students. One section of LS 101 has been offered each Fall and Spring semester since Spring 2002, with an average class size of 25 students. LS 201, History and Theories of Leadership, a Fall semester course offering, saw 11 students enrolled in Fall 2004 and six in Fall 2005. LS 301, a Spring semester offering, had 5 students enrolled in Spring 2005 and eight students, Spring 2006. Three students graduated with a minor in leadership studies in May 2005 and five are scheduled to graduate in Spring 2006.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

Student evaluations, both formal and informal, are very positive regarding the impact of the leadership studies minor program on their collegiate leadership development experience and growth. Student demand is higher than can be satisfied at this time due to limitations on faculty resources. The College has recognized the critical need to provide exposure to the entire student body to the material covered in the leadership studies minor, which focuses on critical ethical leadership issues that impact civil society with special emphasis on issues as they relate to African Americans, their heritage, and their cultural experience. The College is currently undergoing a revision of its general core curriculum and is investigating the feasibility of the incorporation of the leadership studies minor core courses into the general core curriculum of the College.

For the academy as a whole, including an emphasis on the cultural experiences of all minority populations into leadership studies programs would greatly enhance the leadership development experience of the entire undergraduate population. College curriculums have been responsive to the call to provide interested students with opportunity to understand minority populations, their heritage, and their issues by including separate programs such as women's studies, African American studies, and Hispanic/Latino studies. The integration of these studies into the heart of leadership studies programs across all of higher education is the next logical step.

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