

**Purdue University's College of Agriculture Leadership Development Certificate Program**  
Tracie M. Egger, Purdue University

**Introduction**

The Leadership Development Certificate Program is a structured program designed to provide students with experience and growth in leadership. It sets forth an exciting new opportunity to further enhance the leadership skills of undergraduate students in Agriculture. Skills that are essential for success in career, community, and family situations. This program is focused on students taking responsibility for their own growth and development. The program provides a *framework* for them to do this. It is not an academic leadership “minor”, rather it is a “certificate” program that offers broad flexibility, takes advantage of existing leadership development opportunities (both on and off campus) and creates new workshops outside of the classroom. Each student, with the guidance and assistance of a Coach, develops their own individual leadership learning experience that meets the program’s specific requirements.

We believe that:

- All students can and should exercise leadership
- Leadership does not require formal authority or position and can be practiced by anyone interested in making a contribution and influencing a more positive future.
- Leadership is a process of mutual influence directed at achieving purposeful results
- The process of self-discovery is ongoing, and the pursuit of leadership requires perseverance and a commitment to perpetual learning.
- Building trusting relationships is essential for the work of leadership. Leadership never happens alone.
- By incorporating the diverse skills and viewpoints of others, individuals are empowered and group energy is mobilized to pursue collective goals.

**Background**

Employers that interview students at Purdue University have frequently stated that students with leadership skills and experiences are most desirable in today’s changing environment. Based upon these comments, a group of Purdue faculty began exploring the potential for some type of leadership development learning experience for undergraduate students in Purdue University’s College of Agriculture. This discussion led to a one-day focus group meeting with about twenty community and industrial leaders on April 1, 2004. They clearly articulated the need for:

- Leadership
- Interpersonal skills
- Communication skills
- Flexibility
- Commitment to the business
- Team player

From these discussions and deliberations, the Leadership Development Certificate Program was created in 2005 as a joint venture between several departments within the Purdue University

College of Agriculture and supported by the Office of Academic Programs. The purpose of the program is to:

- Prepare students for the workforce by responding to direct feedback from employers, alumni, and recent graduates through structured leadership experiences
- Help more students intentionally plan their leadership journey beginning earlier
- Increase the number of students engaged in leadership development, especially those who may not view him or herself as a leader.
- Enhance students' skills in leadership to be a productive team member, organizational and community leader
- Increase the percent of graduates with the competencies to become active citizens in their communities
- Create some visible added-value incentive to students to stretch themselves

The initiating faculty group consulted with the University of Illinois regarding their leadership certificate program. Their program was used as a model for the development of this program. A leadership development philosophy statement was written early in the process to serve as a foundation for the program. A general framework, along with the philosophy statement, was presented at a College of Agriculture faculty meeting on April 20, 2005 and was approved.

The Leadership Development Certificate Program Committee was formed to implement the program. The committee is composed of a faculty representative from each of the departments in the College of Agriculture. It is responsible for the overall development of the program and its policies. A subgroup of this committee is responsible for its implementation.

The program was launched in August 2005 with approximately 56 students responding to the call-out.

### **How it Works**

1. **Submit Statement of Intent Form with a Résumé:** This is the first step in being admitted into the Leadership Development Certificate Program.
2. **Select a Coach:** A list of qualified coaches can be obtained from the Leadership Development Certificate Program office, which is located in Room 121 of the Agricultural Administration Building.
3. **Complete a Leadership Skills and Attributes Self-Assessment:** All participating students will complete a self-assessment as described in the student manual.
4. **Complete a Personal Development Plan:** Following completion of a self-assessment, students complete a **Personal Development Plan**. This will include establishing self-improvement goals in at least **four** of the **eleven** leadership skills and attributes. Personal growth is expected in all **eleven** skills and attributes and to be reflected in the portfolio.
5. **Participate in On-Campus University Recognized Group Experiences:** Students are expected to be an active participant in **two** non-classroom group or team experiences for at least one semester, contributing to the goals of that group and documenting those experiences and growth in the portfolio.

6. **Participate in an Off-Campus Community Group Experience:** Students are expected to be an active participant and contribute to the goals of at least **one** off-campus, non-university recognized, community group for at least **one semester**. Growth in the leadership skills and attributes must be documented in the portfolio through involvement in positions of employment and civic organizations, mission programs, international experiences, or other activities.
7. **Participate in Leadership Programs and Workshops:** Students must participate in a minimum of **two** College of Agriculture-sponsored leadership programs and workshops. In addition, they must participate in an additional **two** leadership programs, either on or off campus. The leadership growth experienced (reflection) from the **four** programs will be documented in the portfolio.
8. **Complete Six Credit Hours of Academic Course Offerings:** Documentation of growth in the leadership skills and attributes areas will be required through at least six credit hours of academic course offerings. All courses included must be justified and students must indicate how each course applies to their personal development plan and the four major self-improvement goals. NOTE: The courses do not have to have “leadership” as the main focus but students must justify to their leadership coach the course’s relevance.
9. **Develop a Portfolio:** Working with a leadership coach, students develop a portfolio that documents their progress on the four major self-improvement goals identified in their personal development plan as well as personal growth in all leadership skills and attributes.

### **Leadership Skills and Attributes**

Developing leadership skills, like any skill that is learned, starts with a person’s awareness that leadership can be learned. Beyond awareness, a person develops an understanding of the principles and concepts that underlie the skill or attribute. A further step in learning is the ability to articulate the principles and concepts. Still another step of development is to become engaged, to put leadership into action. This highest level of development occurs when the skill becomes integrated into a person’s behavior. Since there are many leadership skills and attributes, leadership development becomes a life-long learning endeavor.

There is a substantial body of research that identifies dozens of leadership skills. The ones chosen as the focus of the Purdue College of Agriculture Leadership Development Certificate Program are fundamental to effective leadership and fall within the philosophy of this program. As a student, you enter into this program with different levels of experience and knowledge about leadership. Therefore the intent of the program is to assist you in recognizing your capacity for leadership and to encourage growth from wherever you are in the developmental process. At a minimum, it is expected that you develop to the behavioral level in at least four competency areas. In other words, you are expected to practice your leadership and become engaged in some worthwhile endeavor while in this program.

The four general competency levels, the intended learning outcomes and the more specific skills and attributes are:

#### **I. Personal Leadership Development**

**Intended Learning Outcomes:** Student understands the meaning of leadership and has developed a personal philosophy of effective and ethical leadership; understands his/her capacity for leadership and is more knowledgeable about managing one's behavior; recognizes that leadership development is a lifelong learning endeavor that requires reflection, renewal, and finding new ways to grow; recognizes the importance of sustaining leadership through encouraging others to develop their leadership abilities.

**Skills and Attributes:**

- Understands Leadership
- Becomes More Aware of Self
- Practices Ethical Behavior
- Sustains Leadership

**II. Interpersonal Leadership Development**

**Intended Learning Outcomes:** Student understands the importance of building relationships with others that are based on trust and respect; values the differences of others and recognizes that such differences lead to richer relationships; enhances his/her communication skills; recognizes that ethical leadership behavior is based on one's character; understands how to manage conflict situations.

**Skills and Attributes:**

- Values Diversity
- Enhances Communication Skills
- Manages Conflict

**III. Group and Organizational Leadership Development**

**Intended Learning Outcomes:** Student understands the importance of working with others in groups and organizations to establish and accomplish common goals; understands the components of change and the role of the leader in bringing about purposeful change; and understands how to manage projects from inception to completion.

**Skills and Attributes:**

- Develops Teams
- Leads Change
- Manages Projects

**IV. Community Leadership Development**

**Intended Learning Outcomes:** Student recognizes the importance of citizenship in a democracy and what it means; understands the diverse and complex nature of communities; understands the role of various institutions in meeting community needs; and is committed to serving others.

**Skills and Attributes:**

- Contributes to Community

**Leadership Self Assessment**

The purpose of the self assessment is to assist students in developing their Personal Development Plan. It is suggested that they fill out the assessment to help them identify their four development goals.

The questionnaire enables students to think about the leadership skills and attributes that are the basis of this program. The assessment enables you to do two things. First, students rate themselves in terms of how well they think they possess the attribute or perform the skill. Second, students indicate whether or not they wish to develop this specific skill. From the assessment, they should be able to develop their four goals.

While this instrument is intended to help students gain new insights into the many leadership skills and attributes as they relate to themselves and their leadership development, it is strongly encouraged that they utilize other assessment instruments as well. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator, the Leadership Practices Inventory, DISC, Insight, and other development tools available through the Dean of Students Office can not only provide new insights into oneself, they can identify patterns of behavior and/or affirm what students already know about themselves.

### **Personal Development Plan**

The **Personal Development Plan**, or PDP, is a roadmap that will guide the student through consistent growth in four or more leadership skills and attributes. The PDP is the foundation to a productive start in the Leadership Development Certificate Program. Similar to a road map, the PDP serves as the student's guide throughout the entire Leadership Development Certificate Program journey.

It is recommended that a table format be used for the PDP. The table should include three columns: Leadership Skills and Attributes (identified through the Self Assessment) and Goal column, a Specific Mechanism column to describe how the student plans to obtain each skill and goal, and an Anticipated Outcome column to document how the student will benefit from the experience.

### **Results to date**

During 2005 - the initial year of the program, 37 students submitted a statement of intent to participate and followed through by submitting a personal development plan by the due date.

During the fall semester of 2006, another call out was held for the second class of participants. Thirty students attended the callout. Twenty-one students have submitted a statement of intent and have completed a personal development plan.

In April 2007, the first Certificate of Completion Ceremony will be held. Of the thirty-seven from class one, there are approximately 20 students who are completed with the certificate program requirements and will be awarded with the certificate of completion. The student's academic transcript will be updated accordingly.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

After the first year experience, the committee decided to revise the student and coach manuals so they could be easier to follow. There is now only one manual for both groups.

The committee felt it was imperative to provide examples of a personal development plan, a portfolio, etc. in the student manual. This helps students understand what to turn in.

The coordinator of the program must provide electronic communication to the students in both classes to keep the student's engaged in their activities.

### **References**

Purdue University College of Agriculture Leadership Manual, 2006:

<http://www.ydae.purdue.edu/ldcp/downloads/2006%20LDCP%20Manual.pdf>