

## **Leadership In Action, A Multi-State Leadership Development Program for College Students**

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### ***Introduction***

#### **Overall proposal purpose**

In this paper and conference presentation, members of a tri-state team who developed an innovative and collaborative undergraduate leadership program, funded by a USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant, will describe the program's progress to date. In summary, Colleges of Agriculture at the University of Illinois, Purdue University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison are jointly seeking to develop the leadership knowledge and skills among students participating in a 21 month personal development program. Additionally, students will further develop their leadership knowledge and skills by implementing a train the trainer model, with the intent that the participating students will be able to facilitate leadership training and development for peers on their respective campuses.

#### **Overall project purpose**

The purpose of our Undergraduate Leadership Development Program (named "Leadership In Action" by participants) is threefold: (1) create learning modules on leadership competencies and make them available to other food and agricultural institutions to assist in developing student leadership initiatives on their campuses; (2) increase the leadership development opportunities for students enrolled at the three participating institutions; (3) evaluate the effectiveness of our learning modules and overall program by assessing the cohort students' growth in leadership competencies during their participation in the program.

#### **Specific goals**

1. Develop 16 learning modules related to personal, interpersonal, group, organizational and societal leadership skills for undergraduate students in food and agricultural sciences programs. Modules are being designed for use in both courses and in experiential learning settings outside the classroom.
2. Test and refine the learning modules by teaching 3 student cohort groups, each cohort including 10 students each from the University of Illinois, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
3. Develop materials and methods to train the cohort students in facilitation skills so they are able to teach the learning modules to peers on their respective campuses.
4. Assist the cohort students in developing and carrying out capstone learning experiences that will allow them to integrate, apply, reflect upon, and document personal growth that occurred during the project.
5. Identify or develop, and utilize, assessment tools to measure growth among cohort students in various leadership competencies.

6. Develop a model that is adaptable for faculty and administrators in widely varying food and agricultural science institutions and settings. Disseminate this model and the 16 learning modules for broad use.

### **How we are funded**

In the Spring of 2005, the tri-state group collaborated on this proposal which we sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Higher Education Challenge Grants Program. Please view the CSREES website for an abstract of our project:

<http://cris.csrees.usda.gov/cgi-bin/starfinder/0?path=fastlink1.txt&id=anon&pass=&search=R=21312&format=WEBLINK> . For this project, an agreement was made that Purdue and Wisconsin would serve as subcontractors on the award, and Illinois would be the lead funding recipient.

### ***Background***

#### **Inception of project idea and relative value to the campuses**

In a meeting of associate deans from the three campuses, they realized that each campus was actively involved in developing leadership programs. They began to discuss the value in collaborating on a project that would advance the objectives the colleges had in common. One particular belief we shared was that leadership development is beneficial for *all* students. As a result, we sought to create a program that would expand the leadership development opportunities of all students, rather than focusing on further developing our "positional" student leaders.

#### **Unique campus contexts**

##### *The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

The *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign* implemented a student leadership development initiative in 1999. This initiative, Illinois Leadership™ was influenced by many perspectives, including *Leadership in the Making: Impacts and Insights from Leadership Development Programs in U. S. Colleges and Universities* (W.K Kellogg Foundation, 1999). "Finding a more effective means for developing the leadership talents of America's young adults requires not only that new methods of teaching critical leadership skills be devised, but also that the notion of leadership itself be broadened," the report states. "And rather than focusing solely on those who hold traditionally recognized positions of leadership, we must broaden our notion of who is a leader so many more Americans are empowered and able to lead in the future."

The Illinois Leadership™ initiative (<http://www.illinoisleadership.uiuc.edu/>) is built upon a theoretical foundation, and identifies specific skills and attributes that serve as the focus of all activities and programming. A campus Leadership Center was opened in 2002 to coordinate all aspects of the initiative. The initiative is a partnership sponsored jointly between the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

Although the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) initiatives, such as Leadership In Action, often function independently of the Illinois Leadership Center, a strong partnership does exist. The College of ACES is recognized as one of the leaders in leadership on campus, and Assistant Dean Charles Olson (PI for this project) serves as co-chair of the campus's Leadership Coordinating Committee. As a result of this connection to the Illinois Leadership Center, the Illinois Leadership Center is seen as a resource and potential venue for the implementation of Leadership In Action.

The initial cohort at Illinois is now half-way through their experience, and preparations are being made for the second cohort. Illinois students have had the opportunity to present teambuilding modules to Fall, 2006 ACES 100 courses, and they have also been invited to work

with other student groups in the College of ACES. They are encouraged to be self-directed in their efforts and interests, and they will have hand in making decisions about how the first and second cohorts will work together on campus. As a result of the campus leadership initiative, students are also encouraged (but not required) to take academic leadership courses, pursue the Illinois Leadership Certificate of Completion, and to take advantage of other leadership development workshops, retreats, and seminars.

*Purdue University*

Purdue University's College of Agriculture initiated planning for a Leadership Development Certificate Program at the initial encouragement of the Dean's Advisory Council and in response to employers of College of Agriculture graduates who 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 a type of leadership development learning experience for undergraduate students in Purdue University's College of Agriculture. The discussion led to a one day focus group during the spring of 2004 utilizing a group of 20 leadership exemplars from Indiana representing communities and industry to develop outcomes and expectations for a student-oriented leadership development program. From the one-day focus group it was clearly articulated the need for graduates of the College of Agriculture to have leadership skills, improved interpersonal and communication skills, flexibility, commitment to business, and to be a team player.

From these discussions and deliberations, the Purdue University College of Agriculture's 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 program created has a specific purpose to prepare students for the workforce by responding to direct feedback from employers, alumni, and recent graduates through structured leadership experiences. The program also has the mission to assist more students intentionally plan their leadership journey at an earlier time and to increase the number of students engaged in leadership development, especially those who may not view him or herself as a leader.

*The University of Wisconsin-Madison*

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the *University of Wisconsin-Madison* began creating a decentralized leadership program in 2003. Widespread support for building a program emerged from a diverse group of faculty and staff in departments ranging from Genetics to Soil Science, Forest Ecology to Bacteriology, and Food Science to the College's social science departments. Faculty and staff were already incorporating various facets of leadership education into the departmental curriculum and into the activities of the department-based student organizations, but undergraduate students were hungry for more opportunities to hone their leadership skills. Operating primarily through the Student Council's leadership, students obtained financial support from segregated fees for leadership retreats and student organization leadership education. Their prompting encouraged the College to offer a leadership seminar, to develop a College Leadership Certificate, and to engage in this collaborative grant.

Because the College's leadership program is decentralized, it is not based on a single theoretical model of leadership. Instead, it is based in the lived experiences of successful faculty and staff in the College who are recognized as national and international leaders in their fields. Further development of the leadership program is one of the main objectives in the "Advance Learning" component of the College's Strategic Plan. The College chose to engage in this grant

because (1) we believed it would expand the opportunities students have to learn about and experience leadership, and (2) because it is based on a “train the trainer” idea, we believed it had the potential to disseminate leadership learning to hundreds more students beyond those who actually participated in the program.

### *How the project works*

#### **Overall cohort idea and plan for student engagement**

Cohorts of 10 students from each of the three participating campuses are selected to participate in the 21 month program. Students selected are starting their sophomore or junior year, and a variety of approaches are taken for recruiting students to the program. In some cases, students are “hand picked” based on their potential and encouraged to apply, others are encouraged to apply by advisors, faculty or peers, and others respond to general calls for applications. Each cohort group convenes together 5 times during the project, beginning with a session in Chicago, then one session on each of the three campuses, and a second session in Chicago at the end of the program. At these sessions, modules on leadership development (topics on personal, organizational, and community development) are taught; leadership exercises are conducted; and outside speakers and resources are used for the cohort to experience the meaning of leadership in a variety of settings. Overall, the time students are in the program spans 4 academic semesters.

During the three semesters following the initial Chicago session, students are expected to teach the leadership modules to groups of students on their campus. A faculty/staff member on each campus serves as a coach to the students for the continued training and delivery of the module content for these sessions. Cohort students are also encouraged to take an academic course related to leadership, when possible, or to participate in other leadership-related programs, such as conferences or workshops.

During the third semester of the student’s participation in the project, they will be enrolled in an independent study course, lead by a faculty/staff member that will allow them (either as an individual, or as a group) to conduct an end-of-project (capstone) experience. This capstone project, with a specifically stated ending goal, will allow each cohort member to utilize, observe, and reflect on leadership skills in action that contributed to the end result of the project.

#### **16 modules and assessing students’ learning**

These are the leadership topics chosen as content for the learning modules. See appendix for sample module.

Nature of leadership	Understanding differences
Gaining self awareness	Problem solving & decision making
Listening and speaking clearly	Building relationships
Team dynamics	Strategic planning
Involving others	Creating change
Understanding values and character	Understanding organizations
Ethics	Project management
Civic responsibility	Conflict management

A self-report assessment with questions aligned to the learning objectives for each of our 16 learning modules was developed and each student will be asked to complete it at the beginning of the program and retrospectively at the end of the program. We seek to understand

students' growth during their 21 month experience in the program and intend to analyze the data we collect to see if there are significant changes from the beginning to the end.

### **Pilot group before receiving grant**

In May of 2005, just before our grant funding began, we decided to test our initial Chicago conference to determine the answers to a few questions. Were the learning modules interesting and in depth enough for the students to learn something substantive? Would the students have fun? Would the timing of our agenda be right? What suggestions would they have for making the conference better?

Eleven students from Wisconsin, ten from Purdue and nine from Illinois participated. See appended agenda from May 2005. Students said they learned a lot about the content from the modules we taught, including teamwork and communication, and that it was great to meet students from other universities and hear new perspectives. They told us that having more social time, more community speakers and going into more depth on the topics would be substantial improvements.

### **The first cohort, beginning May 2006**

We took much of the pilot group's advice, and made some revisions to the kick-off conference in May. The biggest change was that we added a significant service activity and initial assessment, and extended the conference from 2 days to 3. The five modules taught included: the nature of leadership, understanding difference, team dynamics, gaining self awareness, and listening and speaking clearly. See appended agenda.

Returning to campus in the Fall of 2006 we continued to engage the student participants. There has been some initial workshop delivery; the Illinois group delivered workshops to 27 sections of their freshman seminar class. The Wisconsin and Purdue students have not been quite as ambitious but they also have gotten their feet wet conducting a few workshops.

In November, the cohort met for the second time at Purdue University. Evaluations were positive and the three modules delivered were: understanding values and character, building relationships, and problem solving and decision making. Students have continued their engagement with one another on their home campuses and Wisconsin is in the midst of planning the group's third meeting in April. The topics to be taught at Wisconsin include: ethics, understanding organizations and conflict management.

## ***Results to date***

### **Successes**

The tri-state planning team has already seen a number of positive outcomes from our grant-related efforts. They include:

- Relationships among students are strong, across and within campuses. Students seem to enjoy the chance to get to know students they would not otherwise have come to know, whether that is because they are from different majors or from different universities.
- Student evaluations of the conferences are extremely positive. They enjoy the collaborative nature of this grant and claim they are learning a great deal about their own leadership development.
- Students' energy after conferences has raised a campus "buzz" about leadership.
- Service related projects in Chicago were extremely well-received by students and local community participants.

- There are positive, successful working relationships among the coordinators from participating campuses.
- Interest has been generated in the Colleges about the program, what current students can offer, and how other students can become involved.
- Students are taking on positional leadership roles within their college student organizations.

### **Challenges**

Despite the successes, we have identified several challenges that we will be working on during the remainder of the grant:

- Students are hesitant to dive into the “train the trainer” component. Some are not confident in their facilitation skills, others are not confident that they have the content knowledge required to successfully lead their peers in discussion. Some are nervous that they will be asked questions for which they will not have a response. Regardless of the reason, students are not facilitating workshops on their respective campuses at the rate we had hoped. As a result, we may include more intentional training and conversations on how to lead and facilitate workshops.
- Despite reasonably extensive marketing efforts at Purdue, there has not been an influx of requests asking the LIA students to lead workshops for other student groups. Illinois and Wisconsin have done a bit less marketing, being somewhat unsure of where and how to market, and are therefore, uncertain about the demand for their service. The limited marketing which has been done at Illinois and Wisconsin has not provided much fruit.
- The coordinators from the 3 campuses have spent a great deal of time and effort developing the learning modules and formatting them in a way that we thought the students could pick up and use. Instead, in the workshops the students have done, they have mostly reworked the entire module, picking pieces and leaving others. This leaves us to wonder about the possibility of incorporating “pick-and-choose” portions into the modules so that students have an easier time taking what they have learned and sharing it in formats that are different across campus.
- Because the participating schools have very different schedules, the timing of our kick off conference in Chicago has been difficult. It has caused at least one school to feel limited in who will choose to participate because choosing LIA means forgoing significant internship or study abroad experiences.

### ***Conclusions/Recommendations***

#### **Issues we are wrestling with**

One issue is that we only have a finite amount of time with the students and are struggling a bit to decide whether to focus on the students’ personal development or on their abilities to serve in the “train the trainer” capacity. Both were objectives outlined in the grant but both may not be feasible if we wish to do them well.

A second issue is that our respective campuses share many similar goals for our leadership education programs, and we hoped that this project would further these leadership program goals. We have not yet determined whether this grant is accomplishing respective campus goals, and it is possible that we will find it has advanced goals at one or two institutions but not at the other/s.

One important question looms: Will we continue past the time of the grant? If so, how will we fund our programs? We have enough funding to see through most of cohort 2, but we will need some additional funds for that group and it begs the question of whether or not to continue past the grant funding.

In conclusion, it may be a bit premature for our group to offer recommendations. So far, we can conclude the following: students appreciate the opportunity to learn about leadership; our participants like meeting with students from other schools; the topics we have presented thus far seem to stimulate the students; it is unclear whether our train the trainer model will develop as we had hoped; it remains to be seen whether this program makes a longitudinal difference in students' learning; and we have yet to determine whether this tri-state program is furthering our respective institutional goals in the ways that we had hoped.

### **Addenda/Attachments**

May 2005 agenda

May 2006 agenda

Sample module (separate attachment)

**Chicago Leadership Workshop**  
*Purdue University – University of Illinois – University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**May 17-18, 2005**  
**Illini Center, 200 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago**

**Workshop Objectives**

- Create a learning experience in leadership development for students in Ag. & Life Sciences from three Midwestern universities
- Develop competencies in leadership, communication skills and team building.
- Learn how to lead leadership development workshops with student organizations.
- Develop a team from each state to be able to deliver leadership workshops with student organizations in home university.

**AGENDA**

**Tuesday, May 17**

**Attire for Day – Comfortable dress – jeans, t-shirts ok**

7-8:00 am Depart respective universities; walk to Illini Center – bring bags to Center

11:00 Meet in Orange and Blue Room, First Floor, Illini Center  
Welcome – Dr. Chuck Olson, University of Illinois  
Welcome to Chicago – Mr. Brian Moeller, Univ. of IL Class of 1981 in Agricultural Sciences, Vice President of Agribusiness Group, Harris Bank  
Review Agenda, Workshop Goals – Dr. Olson

11:30 Introductory Ice Breaker – Ms. Christina Klawitter, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Noon Lunch at Illini Center (pizza and salads)

12:45 pm What are the Components of a Workshop? – Ms. Klawitter

1:00 Workshop I – *What is Leadership?* Dr. Janet Ayres, Purdue University

2:00 Questions/Comments on Leading Workshop I – Dr. Ayres

2:15 Break

2:30 Workshop II – *Communication Skills for Leaders* – Ms. Tracie Egger, Purdue University

3:30 Questions/Comments on Leading this Workshop – Ms. Egger

3:50 Review of Evening Activities – Dr. Olson

4:00 Adjourn  
Walk back to hotel to check in; change clothes  
Club Quarters Hotel, 312-214-6400  
Attire for Evening – Casual Business – dress slacks/polo shirts; skirts or slacks ok. No jeans, shorts, t-shirts.

5:30 Meet in lobby to travel to restaurant

6:00 Dinner at Ann Sather Restaurant, 929 W. Belmont (773-348-2378)  
Speaker – Tom Tunney, College of Agriculture graduate (U of I) in Restaurant Management; President and owner of Thomas G. Tunney Enterprises; City of Chicago Alderman  
Walk to Millennium Park, free time

### **Wednesday, May 18**

- Attire for day – same as Tuesday daytime
- 7:30 am Check out of hotel; walk to Illini Center with bags
- 8:00 Breakfast at Illini Center – Orange and Blue Room
- 8:30 Workshop III – *Team Building* – Ms. Klawitter
- 10:15 Questions/Comments on Leading Workshop III – Ms. Klawitter
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 How to Prepare for Leading a Workshop – Ms. Klawitter
- 11:30 Lunch
- 12:15 pm State Meetings – Go to 39<sup>th</sup> Floor
- 1:15 Report back and Full Group Discussion – Ms. Egger
- 2:00 Break
- 2:15 Small Group Discussions on Possible Multi-State Activities
- 2:45 Report Back and Full Group Discussion – Dr. Olson
- 3:15 Evaluation – Dr. Ayres
- 3:45 Wrap-Up – Dr. Olson
- 4:00 Adjourn
- Head home; dinner en route
- 8:00 Arrive at university (approximate time)

**Agenda**  
**May 15 - 17, 2006 Workshop**  
**Illini Center, Chicago, Illinois**

Monday, May 15

10:00 am	Arrive in Chicago at Illini Center	
10:15 am	Welcome, Introductory Comments & Assessment Instructions	
	First Floor Illini Center	
10:45 am	Introductory Ice Breaker	
11:30 am	Lunch	
12:00 noon	Module #1 - "What is Leadership?"	(Ayres)
1:00 pm	Break	
1:15 pm	Module #2 - "Gaining Self-Awareness"	(Klawitter)
3:30 pm	Break	
4:00 pm	Introduction to Experiential Event	
5:30 pm	Check into Hotel	
6:00 pm	Dinner with Evening Activity	

Tuesday, May 16

7:30 am	Breakfast at Illini Center	
8:00 am	Module #3 - "Understanding Differences"	(Lorensen)
9:15 am	Break	
9:30 am	Module #4 - "Communication: Listening & Speaking"	(Klatt)
11:00 am - 5:00 pm	Experiential Event in Uptown District & Debriefing	
	Evening Event - To Be Determined	

Wednesday, May 17

8:00 am	Breakfast at Illini Center	
8:30 am	Module #5 - "Team Building: Team Dynamics"	(Ortega)
10:00 am	Break	
10:15 am	"How to Do a Workshop"	(Klawitter)
11:45 am	Lunch and State Meeting	
12:45 pm	Reconvene and Closing	
1:30 pm	Departure	