

Leadership: Knowledge Acquisition, Skill Building, and Competency Development

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This presentation will examine the University of Illinois Leadership Initiative and the partnership of Student Affairs and Academics in developing leadership skills and competencies among undergraduate students. The presenters will describe the integration of extracurricular programs with courses, an academic certificate, and a proposed interdisciplinary minor.

Program participants will: 1) explore a the integration of knowledge, skills and competencies within a leadership initiative; 2) examine the requirements for a partnership between students affairs and academic affairs; and 3) review methods for attracting and engaging students in leadership development.

Raymond L. Price is the Director of the Illinois Leadership™ Center. He works on programs and courses that emphasize organizational change and personal development. Professor Price is also the William H. Severns Chair of Human Behavior in the College of Engineering. As the Severns Chair, he provides opportunities for engineering students to understand and develop skills in human behavior: interpersonal skills, leadership, and management skills that will be useful to them in their careers. Prior to joining the College of Engineering, Dr. Price had a career in industry working in management and organization development and human resources. Dr. Price graduated from Brigham Young University with a BS degree in Psychology and an MA degree in Organizational Behavior. He earned a PhD degree in Organizational Behavior from Stanford University.

Jeffrey Moss, a Program Director for the Leadership Center, focuses on making the Illinois Leadership Initiative a true partnership between academic and student affairs. He teaches a foundation course in leadership, Introduction to Leadership Studies, and is developing additional courses for a leadership minor. Dr. Moss manages the Leadership Certificate program and thoroughly enjoys the direct contact with students in his position. Dr. Moss has a joint appointment in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) and has been at the university since 1996. He received B.S. and M.S. degrees in agriculture from Purdue University and a Ph.D. in education from Texas A&M University.

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Why Students Participate in Leadership Programs?

One of our assumptions is that students participate in activities that provide perceived value to them relative to the time and effort required. Students learn new concepts, skills and competencies when they are willing to engage and explore an area, find sufficient content and excitement to stay engaged, and perceive value in practicing and applying their new competencies. Our ultimate goal is for student to transfer their philosophies, theories, new skills, and commitments into competent action.

At the University of Illinois we have strived to create a leadership program that will generate the willingness to engage and explore leadership issues and then the commitment to remain engaged to build leadership skills and develop effective leadership competencies. We are doing this through a partnership of Academics and Student Affairs. Where we attempt to engage the students across a wide range of learning experiences and then work on the application of the knowledge and skills they acquire.

Programs

Our efforts to engage students and pique their interest come through a series of four professional, one to three day, off site skill building programs. These “i” programs are sponsored by the Leadership Center but are not positioned as formal leadership programs (early research of our students found that many do not consider themselves leaders and would not attend a “leadership” program). Instead we focus on the skills that will be learned and on the desired outcomes:

Insight = the ability to understand our values, assumptions, and our strengths and weakness;

Intersect = the ability to engage others through communication and teamwork skills;

Ignite = the ability to plan and implement systemic, sustainable change; and

Imprint = the ability to make a difference and transition to another set of leaders.

These programs encourage students to continue their learning and skill building through a series of academic courses. Several courses currently exist:

Introduction to Leadership Studies—fundamental leadership theories and concepts;

Engaging Leadership—a series of speakers who exercise leadership in different settings;

Emotional Intelligence in Theory and Practice—a theoretical and practical examination of emotional intelligence and emotional competence development;

Leading Sustainable Change—an upper level course on planning, implementing, and sustaining change;

Integrating Leadership—a capstone course for a proposed leadership minor.

Long Term Skill Building

Usually there is more learning and skill development during a semester long course than during a 1-3 day program. Yet we know that skill building and competency development frequently take longer than a semester. We have plans to implement two efforts to offer students the opportunity to develop their skills over 3-4 semesters. The first option is a Leadership Certificate. In this program students are required to meet the following requirements: 1) attend two of the “i” programs or something equivalent; 2) take two courses in which they build at least one leadership skill; 3) participate in two leadership experiences of at least a semester each; 4) complete a skills assessment; 5) create and implement a personal development plan; 6) complete a leadership portfolio that describes how they have developed in each of eleven skills and attributes we have define; and 7) work on each of these requirements with a coach who is a faculty or staff member or an alum.

The second long-term development effort is a proposed Interdisciplinary Minor in Leadership Studies. We have tentative agreement across six colleges to offer a Minor in Leadership Studies that will require 18 hours of courses. Two of the courses describe above—Introduction to Leadership Studies and Integrating Leadership—will be the required classes with at least four other courses coming from a list of approved courses.

Progress and Future Plans

The Illinois Leadership Initiative currently is serving over 1000 students per year in the “i” programs, has enrolled over 200 students in the courses, and has 60 candidates for the Leadership Certificate. The proposed interdisciplinary minor will go to the faculty senate next fall. Our long term goal is to have one third of the undergraduate students participate in the some aspect of the leadership initiative (approximately 2000 students per year) and have one third of those (approximately 700 students per year) engage in either the Leadership Certificate or Minor where they would have the opportunity to develop their skills and competencies.