

**Association of Leadership Educators
Presentation proposal – 2008 Annual Conference**

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2. Title: Developing Leadership C.O.R.E.

3. Presentation Track: Practice

4. Session Description:

Confidence. Optimism. Resilience. Engagement. Three foundational elements of psychological capital and a critical learning disposition provide foundation for leadership capacity. This practice session explores the challenge of translating PsyCap into program curriculum and pedagogy. Participants examine theoretical underpinnings and activities designed to develop capacities, and explore applications to their programs.

5. No consideration for poster – this session is experiential and does not translate well to poster.

6. Biographical Profile

Tony Middlebrooks, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Leadership in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Delaware. Prior to his academic career, Dr. Middlebrooks spent ten years in non-profit leadership positions. He currently teaches courses in a variety of leadership topics, consults in leadership and program evaluation, and pursues research in leadership development. Dr. Middlebrooks holds a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

7. Paper Description

This session shares the specific activities, curriculum, and pedagogy of a leadership development program in the context of a study abroad experience to Hawaii (for one week) and Australia (for four weeks). Participants comprised 29 upper-level undergraduate students, about 15 of whom were leadership majors. Others included students aspiring to leadership positions in various other fields, and thus pursuing leadership minors.

The program was unique in both its curriculum and pedagogy, integrating Senge's five disciplines and the emerging research on Psychological Capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). This integrated approach comprised a meso-model framework that focused students on the interrelationship between levels of analysis. In other words, the program aimed to develop individual leadership capacity and conceptualization of leadership while at the same time examining broader levels of group, organization, community and culture.

Unlike most study abroad experiences that focus the academic content into blocks of time in a classroom and then to a limited extent in various excursions to cultural and other noted sites of interest, the "academic" material in this program was experiential and integrated into the entire experience in the form of a series of "challenges" and subsequent debriefings.

As students engaged in the various challenges, the foundational emphasis lie in building their **C.O.R.E.:** **Confidence** – self-efficacy to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; **Optimism** – making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future; **Resilience** – when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond to attain success (Luthans, et al., 2007); and **Engagement** – reflective and mindful, critically and carefully integrating new information into one's understanding. To facilitate this foundational focus, students were given laminated cards to reference throughout the program, asking a series of questions to self-assess each of the four capacities:

1. **Confidence** - self-efficacy and effort
Did I put in my best effort?
Did fear influence my effort?
Did I take initiative?
Did I focus & dedicate my attention to the effort?
2. **Optimism** - positive about success
Did I feel I would succeed?
Was my success due to my effort and skill?
Did I need to redirect my efforts?
3. **Resilience** - perseverance and flexibility, using setbacks as setforwards
Did I encounter setbacks or significant challenges?
Did setbacks discourage my efforts?
Did I confront problems directly?
Did problems make me question my ability?
4. **Engagement** - reflective and mindful
Did I reflect and learn from the experience?
Did I integrate this new knowledge into prior?

Challenges varied in aim, content, group composition, roles of group members, level of activity, engagement with real world leaders, and length of time. This variation was purposeful to facilitate engagement, challenge student’s mental models, and emulate the discipline and/or leadership capacity being explored. The following chart illustrates example activities aligned to each of Senge’s five disciplines, along with a brief explanation of pedagogy designed to reinforce the lesson:

Personal Mastery	<i>I Appreciate You Because...</i> Each student writes a personalized, yet anonymous, note to every student in the group, noting what they most appreciate about that student.	Notes were sorted such that each student received a pack of 30 notes of appreciation from their peers. The notes highlighted their strengths and created conditions for developing personal mastery in one another.
Mental Models	<i>Create a Guidebook: How to be an Aussie in Australia</i> Trios of students explore culture at the micro level by gathering information from local individuals and organizations about their culture and what they consider excellence in their organization. How is it uniquely Australian?	Interacting with another culture and then processing within their own group enabled students to compare and contrast mental models, and examine their own.
Shared Vision	<i>Cultural Potluck</i> Small groups with an assigned leader must find a cultural recipe, purchase ingredients, and prepare a dish for the evening meal with a limited amount of cash.	As a small group students needed to come to a shared vision of what was “cultural”, what to make, how to do so in their limited context, and the role of the leader in coming to this shared vision.
Team Learning	<i>Learn To Do Something New</i> As a team with an assigned leader, learn <u>to do</u> something new. All members must learn to do it. Demonstrate to the full group, share a story of failure, and describe how it felt to learn.	This challenge examined the interconnections between the dynamics of learning, the challenge of facilitating everyone to learn, and the role of the leader in the process.
Systems Thinking	<i>Create a Personal Causal Map</i> Individually, consider an action you took. Create a causal map for how that action led to other thoughts and actions throughout the dynamics of the group.	Students were challenged to think beyond the initial cause-effect relationship, seeing how causal chains develop and evolve, and to experience it in the context of the group dynamics.

The legendary Hawaiian folk singer Israel "Iz" Ka'ano'i Kamakawiwo'ole's 1993 album was entitled *Facing Future*. For the aspiring leaders in this program, facing the future meant addressing the mental models built from the past – mental models in the deeper sense – models of feeling and reacting, habits of perceiving and processing others and the world, and the personal challenges interwoven with their CORE. Students were asked at regular intervals to summarize their insights about leadership and themselves. That data suggests a good deal of personal learning and growth as evidenced by the value-based themes. In sum, the students reported learning: (a) the power and value of both individual and the relationship, and the critical importance of trust (in others, in peers, in the process, in self), (b) the value of pushing your personal limits, (c) the value of diversity and synergy, and (d) the power (and limitations) of mental models.

This presentation shares many of the specific activities, the theoretical base behind those activities, and the overall curricular and pedagogical approach designed to build those CORE capacities. Photos, artifacts, and personal stories will provide an intriguing and interactive addition to the academic content.