Leadership in Action
A Leadership Curriculum for College Students

Understanding Leadership
Workshop Guide

Module 1

Purdue University, University of Illinois, & University of Wisconsin - Madison
Understanding Leadership
Workshop Guide

Objectives
Participants will be able to
1. Define leadership;
2. Understand why leadership is important in all aspects of their lives;
3. Understand the important components of leadership;
4. Articulate their personal leadership philosophy.

Materials Needed
• Flipchart & markers
• Tape if flipchart paper is not self adhesive
• Miniature candy bars of different types
• Copies of the following materials for each participant:
  — “Leadership Attributes”
  — “Defining Leadership”
  — “My Personal Philosophy of Leadership”

Workshop Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Icebreaker – “Leadership Attributes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Activity – Defining Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Topic Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Activity – Developing a Leadership Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reflection, Application, &amp; Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Hour 10 minutes</td>
<td>Total Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Instructions to conduct this workshop are in italics. The “script” for the workshop facilitator is in regular type.

**Icebreaker – 10 Minutes**

Distribute a copy of the “Leadership Attributes” activity sheet to each participant. Read the instructions on the sheet.

**Introduction – 5 Minutes**

A workshop facilitator might use an introduction such as the following:

“Leadership” is one of those words used frequently today and often with different meanings. Because you are in this leadership workshop, I’m assuming that you have thought about what leadership means and that we may view leadership from different perspectives. Some of you may have had leadership experiences in high school and now on campus. Maybe some of you have not thought of yourself as a leader, but you are interested in getting more involved in leadership. It is our different perspectives and reflections on leadership that will shape our understanding of what leadership is and how it relates to us.

One of the objectives of this session is to gain a clearer understanding of what we mean by the word “leadership.” First, we are going to discuss what leadership means to you and then how leadership scholars define leadership. We will talk about why leadership is important today and why it is important for us to develop our leadership capacity. We will discuss some of the important components of leadership. And, last, we will develop our own leadership philosophy as a guide to develop our leadership capacity.

**Activity – 20 Minutes – Defining Leadership**

Hand out the “What Is Leadership?” activity sheet to each participant. Break the group into smaller groups of five people. A fun way to do this is with different types of small candies such as kisses, peanut butter cups, etc.

After people are in their small groups, ask them to think about what leadership means to them and to write their thoughts on the activity sheet. This is an individual activity. Allow 3-5 minutes for quiet individual reflection. During this quiet time, provide each group with a sheet of flipchart paper and two markers.

When it appears that everyone has finished their individual reflections, ask them to discuss their thoughts as a group and to develop a group definition of leadership.

Ask each group to select a recorder to record notes for the group on the flipchart paper. Also ask for someone to be prepared to report their group’s thoughts to the larger group. This may be the recorder or another person.

To encourage group discussion, tell them to first introduce themselves to each other. Tell them that as they go around the table, each person should present only one thought about leadership. The next person should share only one idea and so forth. This “Round Robin” technique prevents one person from dominating the discussion and enables all people to participate.

When the groups are finished, ask the reporter from each group to present his or her group’s ideas about leadership. Encourage the reporter to talk about the ideas. Draw out the reporter (or the group) by asking such things as, “Can you say more about what you mean by the word ‘vision’?”
Encourage discussion during the reporting time. Be careful not to put the reporter on the spot with questions that are too probing. At the same time, if a group provides a long list of leadership attributes, ask what the words mean or why they are important. Encourage group members to reveal more about their smaller group’s discussion. When the reporter finishes, ask if everyone in the group thought the same about leadership or if there were differences. If the latter, ask about the differences.

As each group reports back, post the sheets on the wall so you can refer back to the information throughout the session.

When all small groups have reported, ask the total group to summarize what they heard as common characteristics of leadership. Again, encourage discussion during this time, and draw out from the participants why they think certain concepts are important.

As a workshop facilitator, you can summarize the discussion such as in the following example:

“Many of you made reference to characteristics of good leaders such as being good listeners and being honest and trustworthy. Other ideas were about what leaders do, such as develop a vision to provide a direction, make decisions, and get things done. Some of the thoughts are about people and their relationships with one another. Another key component is about tasks, goals, and getting things done. Both the people skills and the ability to accomplish goals are important components of leadership.”

**Topic Discussion – 20 Minutes**

**What Is Leadership?**

There are many definitions of leadership, but one that is widely used is by Joseph Rost, author of Leadership in the 21st Century.

There are some key elements in this definition.

Leadership is a process, not just a focus on a single person.

- Followers (or “collaborators” as Rost calls them in later writings) influence one another through trusting relationships and open and honest communication.
- Leaders and followers have shared purposes, a common vision that brings them together.
- Leadership is about change, doing things in new and different ways, making a difference
- Leadership is purposeful and intentional.

Include points made by the participants that relate to this definition. Refer to the flipchart sheets.

**Why Is Leadership Important in Today’s World?**

*Ask the participants, “Why do you think leadership is important?” Write their responses on the flipchart.*

*Summarize the comments from the students. As the workshop facilitator, you might want to add comments that include the following:*

“We are living in a time of rapid change. Technology has created a global world that has transformed our lives. Our world is more complex and diverse than ever before. Organizations and businesses face new competitive markets. Leadership is needed to create new opportunities and to guide people and...”
organizations in new directions through the maze of change. If everything stayed the same, there would be no reason for leadership. But that’s not the case in today’s world. Leadership is about making a difference, and there are countless opportunities to make a difference in our family life, at school, in the workplace, in groups and organizations, and in our communities.

**What Are the Important Components of Leadership?**

“You have already identified many important components of leadership. (Note to facilitators: Refer back to the flipcharts and highlight a few concepts.) James Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of The Leadership Challenge, identified 10 key characteristics of effective leaders. Through their research, they found that while each leader is a unique individual, there are patterns to the practice of leadership that can be learned. They identified five major components of leadership, most of which you have already identified.

1. **Model the Way**

   Ask the group, “What does this mean to you?” “What do you think Kouzes and Posner mean by this?” Allow time for discussion.

   Kouzes and Posner found that people may be called “leaders” because they are granted a title, such as president, mayor, or CEO. It is a person’s behavior, however, that wins him or her respect. It is important that leaders model the behavior they expect from others. To do this, a person must first be clear about his or her guiding principles and values. Each person must find his or her own voice based on underlying values. Only in this way can a person be “authentic,” “walk the talk,” and consequently earn the right and the respect to lead others.

2. **Inspire a Shared Vision**

   Ask the group, “What does this mean?” Allow time for discussion.

   Leaders look down the road, into the future, and imagine an exciting, highly attractive future for their organization. They see the opportunities and have a desire to make things happen, to create something that no one has created before. They are able to articulate a vision, a future direction for the group, in a way that inspires others to get involved. To engage people in a shared vision, leaders must know their constituents and speak their language. People must believe that leaders understand their needs, hopes, aspirations, and values, and have their interests at heart. Leaders are able to bring people together around the vision and create unity of purpose, showing how the dream is for the common good. Leaders’ belief in and passion for the vision is what inspires and enables others. Leaders need outstanding communication skills to listen to others, understand their needs and hopes, and then convey an inspiring message. As Kouzes and Posner point out, “Leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue.”

3. **Challenge the Process**

   Ask the group, “What do you think Kouzes and Posner mean by this?” Allow time for discussion.

   Leaders are people who are willing to step out of their comfort zone and into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. They are not the people with the answers; rather, they are the people who see good ideas, bring people together to generate new ideas, and challenge the system. They ask questions that no one else is asking; they ask “Why?” They see new ways of doing things. They experiment and take risks. They are not afraid of failure because they learn from their mistakes. Leaders learn from their successes as well as their failures. Leaders are learners.
4. Enable Others to Act

Ask the group, “What does this mean?” Allow time for discussion.

Exemplary leaders enable others to act, to do good work. They foster collaboration and build trust among those who are involved in the project or will be affected by the project. They enable people to feel ownership and responsibility for accomplishing the goals, and they hold people accountable for their actions. They ask for others’ opinions – and listen. They match people’s skills and talents with the job to be done. They help provide information, training, or other resources to enable people to perform at their best. Consequently, people become committed to the vision.

5. Encourage the Heart

Ask the group, “What does this mean?” Allow time for discussion.

Leaders recognize the contributions made by others. They take time to celebrate accomplishments and to say “Thank you.” People are not taken for granted, ignored, or alienated.

Activity – 10 Minutes – Developing a Leadership Philosophy

Distribute a copy of “My Personal Philosophy of Leadership” to each participant. Ask them to think about their individual experiences (or observations of others) and what they have learned about leadership. Ask them to complete the sheet individually, then find a partner and discuss their philosophy.

Reflection, Application, & Summary – 5 Minutes

Ask the participants the following questions for discussion.
• What did you learn about leadership as a result of this workshop?
• How could you use what you’ve learned to improve your student organization or any other group you’re part of?
• How will you use what you’ve learned in your career or in other leadership roles you plan to take?

This workshop has focused on how we define leadership and why it is important in all aspects of our lives. There are many components to leadership in terms of who we are, how we interact with others, and what we do to make a difference. Developing our leadership competencies in terms of our attitudes, knowledge, and skills is a life-long endeavor. As Kouzes and Posner found, “Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and practices that are available to all of us, not just a few charismatic men and women.” (Kouzes and Posner, p. 20)

References

Leadership Attributes

Mingle with others and introduce yourself. Get acquainted by asking others about their leadership strengths and to sign their names in the appropriate box. A person can sign only one time. Attempt to get everyone’s signature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like to meet new people.</th>
<th>I praise others for their work.</th>
<th>I like to initiate new things.</th>
<th>I like organizing projects/events.</th>
<th>I like speaking in front of a group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I try to be a role model for others.</td>
<td>I'm a creative thinker.</td>
<td>I like to get things done.</td>
<td>I'm good with details.</td>
<td>When the going gets tough, I'm there to carry through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like challenges.</td>
<td>I am good at listening to others.</td>
<td>I am confident.</td>
<td>I am good at running meetings.</td>
<td>I take risks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at asserting my ideas.</td>
<td>I'm good at developing a vision.</td>
<td>I am a good team player.</td>
<td>I am good at problem-solving.</td>
<td>I influence others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to inspire others.</td>
<td>I'm good at making decisions.</td>
<td>I'm good at seeing the big picture.</td>
<td>I'm a critical/analytical thinker.</td>
<td>I like change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I build relationships with people.</td>
<td>I'm good at bringing people together.</td>
<td>I value diverse ideas.</td>
<td>I like to think about things before speaking.</td>
<td>I like to celebrate successes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Defining Leadership

Take a few minutes to think about what leadership means to you. If you were to define “leadership” to someone else, how would you define it?

How do you define leadership?

When it appears that people are finished, select someone from your group to take notes on the flipchart and to be prepared to report back to the total group.

Go around the table, and each of you share one thought at a time. Continue around the table until everyone’s thoughts are recorded.

Discuss your thoughts about leadership, and come to a group consensus on a definition of leadership. Write this definition on the flipchart, and be prepared to report back to the group.

Group’s definition of leadership
My Personal Philosophy of Leadership

What have been some of your leadership experiences (or observations of others)?

What have you learned about leadership through these experiences or observations?

What is your philosophy about leadership? In other words, what do you believe about leadership? What do you believe about working with others? What are the values that guide your leadership?

Write your leadership philosophy here.

I believe leadership is...

As you think about your understanding of leadership, what three goals do you have to enhance your leadership capacity?

1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________
About Leadership in Action

Leadership in Action is a multi-state leadership development program for college-age students. It was funded in part by an USDA/CSREES HEP Challenge Grant, 2005-2009 to the University of Illinois, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Undergraduate students from those universities participated in a 21-month program during which the workshop modules were developed, used during the two cohort programs, reviewed, and revised.

We intend that students who have been trained in conducting effective workshops use these materials for leadership workshops with various student organizations. The materials can be used separately for individual workshop sessions, in any combination for a short-term program, or in their entirety for a long-term program.

Leadership in Action Curriculum Team

Janet Ayres, Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Purdue University
Lisa Burgoo, Student Leadership Program Coordinator, Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois
Christina Klawitter, Assistant Dean, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin - Madison
John Klatt, Associate Student Services Coordinator, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Marianne Lorensen, Visiting Leadership Program Coordinator, Human & Community Development, University of Illinois
Charles Olson, Assistant Dean of Academic Programs, Agricultural Consumer & Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois
Robbie Ortega, Graduate Student, Youth Development and Agricultural Education, Purdue University

Understanding Leadership Development Team

Lead Author: Janet Ayres, Purdue University
Editor: Laura Hoelscher, Purdue University
Designer: Russell Merzdorf, Purdue University

It is the policy of Purdue University that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran.

Purdue University is an Affirmative Action institution.
This material may be available in alternative formats.