University-Wide Approach to Leader Development: A Playbook

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INTRODUCTION

In their mission statements, American universities commonly promise to develop students as leaders, but early research suggests there are a limited number of universities that develop students as leaders at an enterprise level.

University leader development programs tend to be boutique, exclusive, and absent universities that develop students as leaders at an enterprise level. In their mission statements, American universities commonly promise to develop leader development as part of their mission. Here is our proposed road map comprehensive, principles-based, university wide approach to leader development.

The aim of this practice poster is to provide a playbook for how to set up a development.

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THE PLAYBOOK

Our vision is to change the way leader development is done at all universities that view leader development as part of their mission. Here is our proposed roadmap for how all top universities could approach starting a university-wide leader development program.

1. Understand Context
   Goal: Develop a clear understanding of the culture, politics, current leader development opportunities, and interests.
   How we did it: Interviewed 185 stakeholders, 1 hour each.

2. Proof of Concept
   Goal: Demonstrate that the evidence-based intervention will be successful in this context. If successful, repeat at larger scale. If unsuccessful, fail fast.
   How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. Scaled to 266 students the following semester. Repeated this process for 4 additional programs.

3. Create a Team
   Goal: Hire professionals for university-wide implementation.
   How we did it: Hired 10 full-time staff, 35 vendor coaches, 45 student affiliates, 2 grad students, 4 student workers. Organized into 3 functional areas: Lead Development, Measurement, and Operations.

4. Establish Guiding Principles
   Goal: Establish durable principles to keep the team focused and in alignment with the mission.
   Our guiding principles:
   - Leader development is a core function of the university
   - Use evidence-based techniques
   - Use professional people
   - Measure outcomes objectively

5. Establish Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)
   Goal: Establish OKRs to reach consensus on how to measure success.
   How we did it: Revised our key results (OKRs) each semester.

6. Build Developmental Frameworks
   Goal: Create a grounding framework to ensure we offer balanced developmental opportunities each semester.
   How we did it: Derived a set of 21 Leader Competencies from contemporary research on leaders. Organized competencies into 5 broad, rationally-derived themes. Drafted a 2-year program plan.

7. Create Measurement Strategies
   Goal: Articulate program impact through outcome measures, not just process metrics.
   How we did it: Created and validated an "Authentic Leader Identity" scale that measures a student's self-concept as a leader, self-confidence as a leader, self-awareness as a leader, willingness to step into leadership roles, and see more in the results section.

8. Design and Execute Aligned Programs

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS

We have moved away from prescriptive, one-size-fits-all leadership training approaches, instead offering coaching and training from certified professionals in five unique program formats. All five programs are open of cost and available to all students. There are no pre-requisites and students are encouraged to start with the program that best meets their developmental needs and time availability.

Doerr Institute Leader Competencies

The 21 Leader Competencies are derived from contemporary research on leaders (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009) and are organized into five themes that pertain either to the individual or to interactions with others.

RESULTS

34% of Rice students engage with Doerr Institute programs prior to graduating. Every leader development program is rigorously assessed on multiple dimensions, from basic enrollment and attrition levels, to subjective evaluations, to pre-post impact metrics tailored to the objectives of each program.

Table 1: The table below provides a conceptual overview of our multi-dimensional approach to assessment.

Table 2: The table below provides a snapshot of the subjective evaluation results for our Spring 2019 Embrace Conflict Catalyst module. Additionally, we ask students for open ended feedback.

Table 3: The table below provides the impact metrics for our Spring 2019 Embrace Conflict Catalyst module. Impact metrics are pre-post indices unique to each training program.

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to create a scalable, rigorously evaluated leader development program if institutions are willing to invest the time, money, and attention necessary to take leadership seriously as an outcome of value. We believe that if universities develop leaders as a core function of the university, use evidence-based techniques, use professional people, and measure outcomes, our nation would produce more effective leaders on a large scale. We are inviting all universities to take advantage of the time value of leader development and join the movement to change the way leader development is done at universities worldwide.

REFERENCES