Dates of course: January-April, 2017
Number of Students: 6
Majors represented: Music (5) and Visual Arts (1)

Summary:
In the spring of 2017, three faculty members worked together to develop an interdisciplinary leadership course that supported the psychological and emotional growth of the student, while simultaneously providing them with the opportunity to test their knowledge, skills, and abilities through new experiences.

Both class time and individual sessions were dedicated to teaching the student the following:
- attentional control and present moment focus
- self-awareness and compassion
- leadership identity and the development of one’s self concept
- critical problem solving and effective communication skills
- how to meet challenging situations with confidence and ease
- and the emotional intelligence required to navigate group dynamics

Additionally, students were tasked with creating, producing and executing four distinct performances, all held on Rice campus. They were responsible for all aspects of performance planning, including the development of a clear and compelling vision, working collaboratively to divide up tasks that reflect the talents, strengths and creative interests of the individual, crafting and executing a sound marketing strategy, working with a budget and acting/playing in or supporting the performances themselves.

(For more details about the strategies utilized to teach these skills, see Appendix A. For more information on each performance, see Appendix B.)

By coupling stretch experiences with individual and group sessions focused on the psychological skills and emotional intelligence needed for strong leadership, Leadership through the Arts offered a rare academic opportunity for students to learn both the hard skills as well as the intangible traits that make one successful in the field of performing arts.

Evaluation and Metrics:
In order to determine leader development throughout the course, students were assessed on the skills of self-awareness, self-control and his/her capacity to work
effectively with others at the beginning and end of the semester. Data collection included the administration of a foundational skills survey, performance narratives and course reflections. Brief details of each are provided below:

**Pre/post foundational skills assessment:** The foundational skills assessment measured the student’s perception of his/her self-confidence, resilience, focus, mindful awareness, motivation/commitment, optimism and emotional management. Improvement was seen in each area, though the greatest impact seems to have occurred in the areas of self-confidence, motivation/commitment, and optimism.

The following is an overview of mean averages for the class at the beginning and end of the semester. The range for assessing strengths or weakness in a particular area is noted below:

26-30: Excellent
20-25: Good, but room for improvement
6-19: Needs attention

**Pre/Post Mean Averages of Variables:**

*Self-confidence*
- Pre: 15
- Post: 21.8

*Resilience*
- Pre: 16
- Post: 19

*Focus*
- Pre: 18
- Post: 21.8

*Mindful Awareness*
- Pre: 17.2
- Post: 19

*Motivation/ Commitment*
- Pre: 22.3
- Post: 26

*Optimism*
- Pre: 21.8
- Post: 25.2

*Emotional Management*
- Pre: 19.8
- Post: 21.5

**Performance Narrative:**
At the beginning and end of the course, students wrote performance narratives answering the question, “Who are you as a(n) artist/performer?” Cross-comparison of these narratives revealed increased confidence, shifts in self-awareness and greater clarity in artistic identity.
Course and Personal Reflections
At the semester’s end, students were asked to turn in reflections on the efficacy of the course as well as their perceptions on their progress as leaders in the field of visual and performing art. The following are examples of summary statements which we believe reflect the experience and perceived development of each person in the course.

1. I was particularly interested in the combination of opportunities to pursue additional foundational skills training, thematic programming, and strategic marketing, all of which were in scarce supply at the Shepherd School due to enrollment caps on career skills courses. After dedicating three semesters to JUMP! and receiving leadership coaching from the Doerr Institute in Fall 2016, this hybrid course was an ideal extension of my outreach activities into meaningful venues on campus and has become a gratifying culmination of my six years as a Rice student.

2. This course has been extraordinarily challenging, revealing, and rewarding for me. I was not sure what to expect walking in, and I did not anticipate the intensity of putting together a series of performances with such a busy group in this semester. I felt that our project ended up being a very successful experience, both in terms of the development of the group and in terms of the programs that we presented. This success was only possible because of the foundational skills we learned and applied in the course and because of our development of organizational systems that did a good job of delegating tasks and establishing clear goals and expectations for each performance.

3. Over the course of the semester, I found myself working on strategies to recognize the strengths and interests of team members so that those could be put to the best use possible in order to benefit the group. This requires attentiveness, good organization, and, above all, willingness to listen to what others have to offer (even, or especially if, those are things that had not occurred to me independently). I have made many valuable connections with artists, presenters, and organizers both on- and off campus through this course, which I hope to be able to utilize for future projects. I have also gained numerous strategies to combat stress and maintain focus in difficult situations.

4. The past four months have been incredibly eventful and rather insightful. Revelations have been uncovered about how we all work within groups, how we react in leadership situations, what our different strengths and skills are, and how we might continue to move forward in the development of these talents as well as the cultivation of our weaker areas.
5. Part of my growth this semester, and really in the past year, has been recognizing that perfection is not the only path to happiness and stability. Successful failures are good…

6. I learned a lot about myself during this class, most of which was not a new epiphany about something completely new, but rather a deeper, more fleshed-out understanding of my personality, strengths, weaknesses and insecurities.

7. …through being mindful of my emotions and physical feelings, I have learned how to recognize when I am being overly-assertive to compensate for insecurity, and when I am actually contributing to the progress of the group in a healthy way. Being able to acknowledge my insecurities in a non-judgmental way has also given me more compassion for others.

8. An important lesson I am still learning is that being a leader is not the same thing as doing everything at once. Things always work better when I trust everyone to do their jobs. The more I am able to settle into the present moment and have faith in the plans we have put in place together as a group, the better of a leader I can become.

Lessons Learned/Suggestions for Future
As was stated earlier, coupling stretch experiences with structured reflection and specific exercises designed to transfer and propel learning forward helped students in the class cultivate knowledge born of experience. This extends to knowledge of the self, knowledge of others and a more expansive understanding of artistic entrepreneurship. It was interesting to hold space while the students struggled to implement the foundational skills we were attempting to impart.

Regarding group work, we found that it was helpful to instruct the students in how to plan and run a meeting for performance planning. To this end, each student was assigned to set and share an agenda for the in-class meeting, and lead the meeting in a way that incorporated mindful listening, presence and trust of each other. At the end of each meeting the instructors gave feedback on the experience and offered suggestions for moving forward. The students appreciated this opportunity as a way to take their work with the foundational training skills into a group setting, as well as the result of “getting things done” more efficiently.

Overall, the course ended up following the syllabus as planned. The emphasis on individual and small group work in the foundational training skills was prominent in the first half of the semester, and was generally accomplished outside of class time. In the following weeks, we progressed to incorporating these skills into group work with performance planning and debriefing sessions during class time.
We did not anticipate the large number of outside commitments that our students needed to honor during the spring semester, such as graduate school auditions and major projects connected with their degree programs. This added a significant burden on the overall workload of the class members that was not related to the course itself. It also interfered with our ability to recruit a more varied interdisciplinary population in the course. In the future we would arrange to offer the course in the fall semester when student outside obligations are not so heavy.

Lastly, when writing the grant, we inadvertently forgot to include the cost of fringe to the full-time faculty salaries, and this addition was not include in the budget provided to the Innovation Award committee. This oversight caused us to go over budget, in spite of the fact of spending less than anticipated in other areas.

**Road Map for Other Departments**
This class is a nice model for other departments on campus to provide students with authentic leadership experiences in line with the demands of their given field. The foundational leadership skills that were featured are ubiquitous across disciplines and professions, other departments need only tweak the project-related component to make it relevant to students outside the arts. The respective expertise of each instructor drove the development of strategies for teaching the intangible traits associated with strong leaders in a particular fashion, but there are a variety of ways in which the foundational skills associated with this course could be imparted.

All three instructors are interested in collaborating with a variety of programs and majors, including the Center for Civic Leadership, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and the majors/sub disciplines associated with STEM, humanities, and business.
Appendix A

Leader Development Strategies
The following is a brief description of the practices featured in the course, strategies for instruction and the associated leader development outcomes.

Mindfulness

Description and Overview
Mindfulness involves paying attention to what is occurring in our present moment experience, with an attitude of openness and non-judgmental acceptance. It engages all of our senses as we open to our entire experience, becoming aware of our body, emotions, thoughts and the external environment. It is a natural and an intuitive state of presence in which we can feel more connected, real and alive.

Several disciplines and practices can cultivate mindfulness, such as yoga, tai chi and qigong, but most of the practices associated with this class feature mindfulness-based meditation. Mindfulness meditation is a self-regulation practice that focuses on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calmness, clarity and concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Throughout the semester, students will receive group and individual training on mindfulness and have opportunities to explore ways in which it can be integrated into their professional and personal lives.

Specific leader development outcomes associated with mindfulness:
Greater self-regulation, enhanced self-awareness, improved social skills, greater inner calm and peace, greater self-/other-empathy and compassion, deeper listening and engagement, and more tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty.

Psychological Skills Training

Description and Overview
Borrowing from techniques associated with cognitive behavioral therapy, psychological skills training helps individuals make adjustments to their actions, thoughts, feelings and physical sensations in order to improve performance. It is an integrated, multidimensional approach to mental training and a valuable complement to physical and technical training of any kind.

Throughout the course, students will be taught techniques (e.g. imagery, cognitive restructuring and goal development) that can be used to help overall qualities of mental toughness.
Specific leader development outcomes associated with psychological skills training:
Enhanced self-confidence, greater motivation, more effective coping strategies, greater resilience, evolved self-talk, and enhanced concentration and attention.

Body-Based Practice

Description and Overview
Notions of embodiment as it relates to leadership receive little attention within the leadership canon. And yet, leadership is a whole-body activity, not simply a cognitive one. Our bodies are a great source of wisdom, and powerful tools for communication. It is the leader’s body, and the way he or she uses it to express their true self, that is the mechanism through which authenticity is conveyed. Additionally, the way we show up physically contributes to our emotional and interpersonal way of being. The more we bring awareness to the sensations associated with our physical being, the more we can enlist those sensations to consciously shape how we know, how we define ourselves, how we construct our interpersonal relationships and how we are received by the world.

There are several body based practices that will be featured in this course, including working with the breath, responding to sensations, exploring of alternative ways of moving and consciously altering movement habits. Below is a more detailed description of activities featured in the class.

Public Speaking and Presence
Throughout the semester, students will have the opportunity to develop effective leadership presence, as well as learn voice skills and oral communication techniques. Students will receive small group training in public speaking, which primarily draws from the work of Kristen Linklater and includes voice and breath awareness exercises, projection, articulation and diction. They will also be taken through a series of exercises that are meant for the students to feel comfortable and confident as they present their work, be that an artistic piece or an elevator pitch. These techniques are garnered primarily from Viola Spolin’s “Improvisation for the Classroom,” and Constantin Stanislavsky’s “An Actor Prepares.”

Alexander Technique:
The Alexander Technique is a mind/body reeducation of human movement that has been teaching people to come back to conscious awareness and choice for over a century. Students learn that their thinking, emotions and quality of movement are intrinsically intertwined. Each aspect affects the other. The teacher guides the students using a step-by-step process of conscious thought and kinesthetic awareness into a more easeful state of mind/body. As a result, students experience a fuller sense of the self and a freer quality of movement. A key component of the Technique is the concept of Inhibition. Inhibition is the recognition of the power of choice
in the pause between a stimulus and response. By choosing to employ the principals of the Technique as a response to any stimulus, students can change strong habitual patterns of tension and unhelpful styles of thinking.

Emphasis is placed on postural organization and basic movements, which are fundamental to one’s overall state of being. When people are on autopilot, they typically go through life in a state of structural contraction, collapse or over stiffening. By encouraging the whole self to soften and enliven into expansiveness, students experience a fuller sense of the self and a freer quality of movement. As students’ progress they bring particular activities, (including speaking, running, musical practice, acting, using a computer) as well as emotional or intellectual reactions into lessons to explore.

Students in the course will receive a series of small group or individual private lessons in which they learn and practice the principles and skills of the Technique.

**Specific leader development outcomes associated with the body based practices:**
Self-awareness, self-regulation, greater ease in engagement with others within group activities, enhanced decision making, and creative problem solving, stronger oral communication and more refined leadership presence.
The Listening Project
Presents a Series of Free Interactive Performances at Rice University

An Evening of Music and Mindfulness
with Micki Fine

Rice Memorial Chapel
Sunday, April 9
7pm
Performance, Meditation, and Conversation

Please attend our next installment, A Conversation with Sol: An Immersive Multimedia Experience. The showing will be in the Sol LeWitt exhibit at the Rice Gallery at 8pm on Wednesday, April 13.

Please attend our final event, Reflection Loop: An Improvised Musical Exhibition. The showing will be in the Main Gallery of the Moody Center for the Arts 8pm on Wednesday, April 19.

Free Admission
Reception to Follow

For more information, please email TheListeningProjectRice@gmail.com
For a Rice University map and parking information, please visit rice.edu/parking
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IN COLLABORATION WITH

THE TRANSITORY SOUND
AND MOVEMENT COLLECTIVE

A Conversation With Sol:
AN IMMERSIVE
MULTIMEDIA EXPERIENCE

Sol LeWitt Exhibit
RICE GALLERY
THURSDAY
APRIL 13
8 PM

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Reflection Loop:
AN IMPROVISED MUSICAL EXHIBITION

Main Gallery of The Moody Center for the Arts
Wednesday, April 19th at 8PM

An improvisatory collaboration between the performers and the audience

Free Admission
Reception to Follow

For more information, please email TheListeningProjectRice@gmail.com
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## Budget

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