University-Wide Approach to Leader Development: A Playbook

LILLIE BESOZZI AND STEPHANIE TAYLOR | THE DOERR INSTITUTE FOR NEW LEADERS AT RICE UNIVERSITY

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 of measured outcomes. Additionally, the business world spends the majority of leader development dollars at the very top executive level. This leaves the majority of our young leaders without access to high-quality, professionally-led leader development.

The aim of this practice poster is to provide a playbook for how to set up a university-wide leader development program that best meets their developmental needs and time availability.

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 road map for how all top 20 universities could approach setting up a university-wide leader development program:

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

2. Proof of Concept
   - Goal: Determine if 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 leaders.

3. Create a Team
   - Goal: Hire professionals for university-wide implementation.
   - How we did it: Created and validated an “Authentic Leader Identity” process metrics.

4. Establish Guiding Principles
   - Goal: Establish durable principles to keep the team focused and aligned 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: We established OKRs to reach consensus on how to measure success.

6. Build Developmental Frameworks
   - Goal: Create a grounding framework to ensure we offer balanced developmental opportunities each semester.
   - How we did it: We established developmental frameworks to ensure we offer balanced developmental opportunities each semester.

7. Create Measurement Strategies
   - Goal: Articulate program impact through outcome measures, not just process metrics.
   - How we did it: We established a set of 21 Leader Competencies from contemporary research on leaders.

8. Design and Execute Aligned Programs
   - Goal: Articulate program impact through outcome measures, not just process metrics.
   - How we did it: We established a set of 21 Leader Competencies from contemporary research on leaders.

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 free 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.

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.

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2. Proof of Concept
   Goal: Determine if 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 undergraduates 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: Leader 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
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5. Establish Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)
   Goal: Establish OKRs to reach consensus on how to measure success.
   How we did it: All team members read John Doerr’s New York Times Bestseller, Measure What Matters. The team sets 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 (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009) and are organized into five themes that pertain either to the individual or to interactions with others.

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-conceptualization 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

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DESIGN AND EXECUTE ALIGNED PROGRAMS

1. Catalyst Modules Available: (Developmental Deep Dive)
   Students can choose from a Catalyst Module designed to help develop their leadership identity and build leadership skills. They can use in the workplace and in interpersonal relationships. Two 2-hour sessions.

2. Synthesis Themes: (Overcoming Perfectionism)
   Enthusiastically accepted with open minds. Two 2-hour sessions.

3. Excerpts
   - Overcoming Perfectionism
   - Embrace Conflict
   - Deliver Feedback
   - Personal Development Plan
   - Catalyst Skills

4. 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.

5. Knowledge Self-Awareness
   - Knowing Yourself
   - Being Aware of Others

6. Controlling Self
   - Controlling Yourself
   - Effortful Communication

7. Knowing Self
   - Personalized Goals
   - Knowing Your Time

8. Doing Self
   - Using Professional People
   - Using Evidence-Based Techniques

9. Process Metrics
   - Goal: Articulate program impact through outcome measures, not just process metrics.
   - How we did it: Derived a set of 21 Leader Competencies 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.

10. Bestselling Books
   - coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice
   - 360 Feedback
   - 60-Hour Training Certificate

11. Impact Metrics
   - 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 openended feedback.

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 measurably 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.

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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 20 universities could approach starting a university-wide leader development program.

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   - How we did it: All team members read John Doerr’s New York Times Bestseller, Measure What Matters. The team sets 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 leadership. Organized competencies into 5 broad, rationally-derived themes. Drafted a 3 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-conceptualization as a leader, self-confidence as a leader, self-awareness as a leader, willingness to step into leadership roles.

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 free 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.

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

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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 measurably 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.

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.

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University leader development tends to be bespoke, exclusive, and absent of measured outcomes. Additionally, the business world spends the majority of leader development dollars at the very top executive level. This leaves the majority of our young leaders without access to high-quality, professionally-led leader development.

The aim of this practice poster is to provide a playbook for how to set up a leader development dollars at the very top executive level. This leaves the majority of students in their mission statements, American universities commonly promise to develop leaders at all universities that view leader development as part of their mission. Here is our proposed roadmap for how all top universities could approach setting up a university-wide leader development program.

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1. Catalyst Modules
   - Goal: Develop a playbook for how to set up a leader development dollars at the very top executive level. This leaves the majority of students in their mission statements, American universities commonly promise to develop leaders at all universities that view leader development as part of their mission.
   - How we did it: Derived a set of 21 Leader Competencies from contemporary research on leadership. Organized competencies into five themes that pertain either to the individual or to interactions with others.

2. Developmental Deep Dives
   - Goal: Offer a deep dive into a specific theme or skill. How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

3. Synthesis Group Coaching
   - Goal: Provide a space for students to reflect on their learning experiences and connect with others. How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

4. Empowerment of Others
   - Goal: Help students develop the skills to empower others. How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

5. Professional Coaching
   - Goal: Offer one-on-one coaching to help students reach their leadership goals. How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

RESULTS

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2. Subjective Evaluations
   - Goal: Measure student satisfaction and engagement with the program.
   - How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

3. Conclusions
   - Goal: Drawing conclusions from the results of the program.
   - How we did it: Matched 12 undergraduate influencers with 3 professional leadership coaches. 5 scaled to 266 students the following semester.

REFERENCES

