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Leadership is a quality that is highly prized in our society. Students in colleges and universities across the country study leadership theories and ideas; they read books and write papers but are they really learning? Researchers and educators alike have begun to argue that true leadership skills are best learned through practice. High Sierra, an off-campus program of Azusa Pacific University, has long embraced the belief that leadership is learned through experience. This belief has shaped wilderness backpacking trips which are an important part of each semester because students are challenged to act as leaders on a daily basis, however, the practical application of learning leadership through experience has traditionally ended there. This is shameful for a place that prides itself on producing leaders. In an effort to act on this important idea High Sierra has recently created and adopted a new leadership position, Preview Ambassador, that will allow students to practice leadership in a tangible way.

Literature Review

“Colleges and universities have long been perceived as the cradle of leadership and creators of leaders. For decades, society has viewed institutions of higher education as the training ground for future leaders” (Bird, Ji, & Boyatt, 2004, 226). Colleges and universities across the country seem to willingly accept this burden and challenge to develop and produce leaders. Increasingly, colleges are offering majors or minors in leadership studies or leadership development (Komives, Longenbeam, Owen, Mainella & Osteen, 2006). This movement toward leadership course offerings has resulted in a great deal of research which is helpful in the designing or re-designing of leadership programs.

Throughout the literature researchers reference two types of leadership that are prevalent in our society; industrial leadership, also known as hierarchical leadership, and post-industrial

leadership, also known as relational leadership. Researchers are noticing an obvious shift in leadership style towards the latter, especially on college campuses. Still it is necessary to have a basic understanding of both to understand the trends in leadership development as they are seen on college campuses. Industrial leadership is driven by the idea of the individual leader with ultimate power and control. Leaders are focused on task and completing the task rather than interpersonal relationships. In general industrial leadership is a form of autocratic government (Dugan, 2006a). As the name suggests there is a hierarchy and chain of command that is well established and respected in this school of thought. Today's college students are well aware of this school of thought as many have grown up around these ideas. However, it appears that students today have not been able to integrate this idea with their growing need and desire for meaningful relationships.

The new mindset on college campuses falls much more in line with the post-industrial approach to leadership. This approach focuses on the process, collaboration and transformation through leadership. In short this style is much more relationally focused in that leaders and followers work together to achieve a common goal or task. Both parties can learn and grow from each experience (Dugan, 2006a). In general, this style of leadership is more reflective of the relationally minded students found on college campuses today. Interestingly, it has been argued that this new shift in leadership is more friendly and, perhaps, more suited for females. Despite this argument institutions have yet to see a rise in women's leadership aspirations (Boatwright, Egidio, & Kalamazoo College Women's Leadership Research Team, 2003). Despite claims that this style is more appealing to one sex it appears that this style of leadership is making leadership positions and experience more available and appealing to all students on campus.

While researchers recognized both leadership paradigms it is through the lens of the latter that the majority of studies have been viewed. That being understood it is clear to see how researchers across the board have come to one overwhelmingly clear conclusion; “learning about leadership is not the same as learning to be a leader” (Posner, 2008, 26). Researchers are asserting, at an ever increasing rate, that leadership is best learned through practical hands-on experience. It is simply not enough for students to theorize about leadership in the classroom; they must be allowed the opportunity to practice leadership outside the classroom and utilize the classroom as a time for reflection and discussion of their experiences (Posner, 2008).

Komives, Longenecker, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen (2006) defined leadership development as “engaging with learning opportunities in one’s environment over time to build one’s capacity or efficacy to engage in leadership” (p. 402). With this definition in mind it is no wonder that educators are turning to experiential education as the primary means of developing leaders. Two primary means of offering students leadership positions emerge from the literature. The first is the traditional means of encouraging a student to serve in a leadership position on campus. This is the most common method of offering students leadership experience. Student athletes, resident assistants, orientation leaders, peer mentors and associated student body members are all examples of common on-campus leadership positions. The benefit of this position is that students are often mentored by a faculty or staff member. The second method is to empower students to act as a leader through service learning. Service learning has proven to promote leadership development more efficiently than traditional internships or cooperative education because of the link offered between formal and real-world learning (Govekar & Rishi, 2007). Educators are employing both methods to get students into places of leadership where the learning becomes real and tangible.

Students who have served in leadership positions in one form or another, have affirmed leadership as a positive experience during their college career. A student's positive leadership experience not only influences the entire college experience but is also recognized as a noteworthy variable in a student's life. Student leaders identified volunteer service, experiential activities, and collaborative learning as the most valuable components of their leadership development. Students are able to recognize that leadership opportunities come with risk, a common risk, identified by students, is the opportunity to fall into alcohol abuse. This risk is particularly high for leaders of athletic and Greek organizations. Despite the risk students and researchers alike recognize the many benefits of students serving in leadership. Further students also stated experiential activities are directly related to learning and personal development which upholds the findings of many researchers arguing for hands-on learning in leadership (Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005).

As students begin to embrace the idea of leadership experience and recognize its value to their learning and college experience and universities begin to include leadership in their mission statements it is imperative that every student is included in leadership development. Thompson (2006) noted that leadership development research was based largely on students who currently held leadership positions. He asserted that if colleges and universities want to pride themselves on producing leaders, than they must continually assess leadership skills of all students regardless of their title. Thompson upheld the belief of many college impact theorists stating that interactions with faculty, staff and peers were the strongest contributor to a student's ideas towards leadership. When a student feels supported and safe they are more likely to pursue a leadership position, faculty and staff play an important role in developing a feeling of safety. With these two thoughts Thompson concluded that even students who are typically overlooked

as leaders can be challenged as leaders if faculty and student affairs practitioners collaborate (p. 347-349).

Finally, it is important to note that researchers have identified many benefits to actively developing leaders within the campus environment. For example, across the board researchers have linked leadership development with student learning. Dugan (2006a) reported that leadership programs also enhanced student learning in the areas of civic responsibility; multicultural, societal and personal awareness; and skill development (217). In a different article Dugan (2006b) identified eight additional values that are developed through leadership including; “consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, common purpose, collaboration, controversy with civility, and citizenship” (p. 335). Many researchers also cited interpersonal skills as an important area of student development addressed by leadership programs, especially under the influence of post-industrial leadership theories. Further students in leadership are more likely to be involved and engaged in campus life and vice versa (Dugan, 2006b). The benefits of leadership development do not end with acquired leadership skills but also include increased campus involvement and additional student learning.

Researchers have made it clear that leadership education is an expectation for institutions of higher education. Moreover, society has come to expect that graduates have more than theories to offer; they expect graduates to offer experience. The evidence reviewed here reinforces the needs, benefits and different perspectives of experiential leadership education. Leadership education is not just the work of student affairs personnel or just the work of faculty members; rather it is the intentional collaboration of the two houses that results in leadership education which offers growth and development for all students. In this collaborative effort

experiential learning has become today's primary instrument for teaching and learning leadership.

Overview of Program

Each semester High Sierra must recruit students for the upcoming term; in an effort to do this more effectively High Sierra has introduced a Preview Weekend. Preview Weekend is designed to offer students currently attending classes on APU's main campus an opportunity to visit and explore the High Sierra campus. Preview students have the opportunity to: enjoy some of the many activities that High Sierra has to offer; interact with current students, faculty and staff; obtain academic advising as it relates to participation in the High Sierra program; become familiar with the uniqueness of High Sierra; explore the campus and simply get away from the city for a few days. Each the semester High Sierra selects two students, Preview Ambassadors, to help facilitate this weekend of fun and learning.

For students serving as Preview Ambassadors this is an opportunity to practice the leadership skills and ideas discussed in their leadership class. All first semester High Sierra students are required to enroll in a leadership class, entitled Leadership through Wilderness Experience. The principles discussed in this class can help to guide a student through any leadership position including Preview Ambassador. The Preview Ambassador position provides an experiential leadership learning opportunity for two students. The responsibilities of this position are largely relational in nature which falls in line with the current post-industrial approach to leadership that. As students serve in the Ambassador position they are encouraged to develop relationships preview students, strengthen relationships with current students, faculty and staff while also gaining hands on experience.

Preview Ambassadors are responsible for assisting in the planning and execution of weekend activities and events. Ambassadors face the additional challenge of planning events that are fun for both preview and current students. Preview students need to be learning about the program while also having fun and interacting with current students who view the weekend as a reprieve from their normal weekend schedule of homework. Throughout the weekend Ambassadors are expected to be an obvious presence on campus. They are expected to represent the university and the program, specifically, in an appropriate manner.

Ambassadors are selected during the first month of the new semester through an application and interview process. Preference is given to students who have attended a High Sierra Preview Weekend. Students are guided through the planning process, and meet regularly with the program director, the resident director, and the graduate assistant. Ambassadors are encouraged to collaborate with other student leaders, who are able to share responsibility for various events throughout the weekend. Ambassador responsibilities begin with the first team planning meeting and are completed once the preview students have left the High Sierra campus and the students have met with the program director, resident director and graduate assistant for a time of reflection and debriefing. Finally, Preview Ambassadors are compensated with 30 units of ministry and service, which are a requirement for graduation from APU.

Learning Objectives

As a result of serving as a Preview Ambassador students will:

- Collaborate with other student leaders (i.e. resident assistants (RA), and spiritual accountability & resource (SAR) team members) to create a welcoming environment for preview students

- Be equipped to coordinate one activity that will foster understanding of the High Sierra Semester
- Be able to identify one area of personal strength and weakness as a leader

Format

- Preview Ambassadors are selected through an application and interview process during the first month of classes
- Ambassador training and planning will begin one month prior to Preview Weekend
 - Training will consist of; a review of desired goals and outcomes of Preview Weekend, an overview of Ambassador expectations and requirements , and a review of Frequently Asked Questions related to the High Sierra campus
 - Planning will also include a review of past Preview Weekend events and activities as well as notes of prior successes and failures.
- Ambassadors will attend all required training and planning meetings
- Ambassadors will plan fun and informational activities for the weekend
 - Ambassadors should contact High Sierra faculty members and seek their involvement and presence on campus throughout the weekend
- Ambassadors will serve as the liaisons between students and staff during Preview Weekend
 - Ambassadors will be primary contact person for preview students while they are on the High Sierra campus.
 - Ambassadors will also be the representative for current students during the planning of Preview Weekend

- Ambassadors will help to foster interaction between current and preview students during Preview Weekend
 - It is the responsibility of Ambassadors to make sure that current students are aware of activities provided during Preview Weekend
 - Ambassadors will work to help current students know that the events of the weekend are planned as much for them as for the preview students.
 - Ambassadors will find current students who are willing to either host students in their rooms; or move to preview student housing for the weekend
- Ambassadors will collaborate with other student leaders
 - Fellow student leaders are an excellent resource for Ambassadors who may need additional help with setup of events and activities
 - Well informed student leaders can help foster additional interaction between current and preview students
- Ambassadors will be an obvious presence on campus during Preview Weekend
 - Ambassadors will be there to welcome the vans of preview students
 - Ambassadors will attend all designated Preview Weekend activities
- Ambassadors will assist the program director, resident director, and graduate assistant with a debriefing time of the weekend

Conclusion

High Sierra has sought to meet the same demand as many colleges and universities across the country; to produce experienced leaders. In light of the literature which recognizes experiential education as the primary means of cultivating leaders High Sierra has created an opportunity for two students to act on their formal leadership training by serving as Preview

Ambassadors. These students will be guided in their journey by High Sierra staff and supported by peers through collaboration with fellow student leaders. Ambassadors assist in High Sierra's recruitment of new students while simultaneously engaging in personal learning.

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