Division of Student Life’s Six Guiding Principles for Student Leadership Development

Below are six principles that can serve as a guide for students in regard to leadership that work in tandem with each other. In these six areas, students’ learning outcomes are described in detail below the principle. They are as follows:

A. Leadership is Personal
This principle is about the student becoming self-aware requiring introspection and reflection. Personal leadership development encourages the student to understand and answer what is specifically important to them when it comes to their values, passion and perspectives. Students will understand areas of where they want to invest their time and will focus on maximizing and identifying both areas of strength and growth and where can they be more effective as a leader.

Relative to self-management, students also need to focus on the specific behaviors that drive their passions and actions. Personal reflection requires the student to identify areas where they want to specifically take action or a stand on; in other words, what are they passionate about? Students will be able to identify beliefs that influence and energize behavior and clarifies a direction for their passion. In what ways are they able to become focused, directed and sustained? Students should be able to identify areas of flexibility and adaption to change.

Skills: Self-awareness, balance, integrity, value clarification, goal setting, reflection

B. Leadership is Relational
This principle focuses on how students are able to relate to others as a leader; in particular, what it means for them to be a member of a team and/or group. Students will be able to identify ways that they are able to strengthen their interactions with others and how they convey trustworthiness and respect in their actions toward others in the group. Students under this principle will improve their ability to speak, listen and empathize with others, while remaining attentive to understanding other people’s motivation and styles so as to improve upon their own team interactions. Students will also understand how to ask for feedback as well as provide constructive feedback in return.

Students will also be able to identify the roles that they play within a group or team, whether that be advisory, collaborative, operational/tactical, participatory, directive or pace-setting, for example. Students will understand what it means to create “safe” environments where all people feel free to contribute, learn and experiment such that all members feel engaged and purposeful. In doing this, students will become confident in how to build a team and develop an organizational capacity, while being able to know ways in which they are able to effectively empower others and create an environment where others can see possibility. Students will have the ability to develop a shared vision by identifying the ways in which they are able to initiate new ideas and directions.

Skills: Interpersonal awareness, collaboration, coalition building, networking, group development, effective communication

C. Leadership is Contextual
L. Flynn, 2012 (adapted from T. Purinton, 2008)
This principle creates an opportunity for students to think intentionally about the setting and situation in which they are operating and leading within. By thinking contextually, students can more effectively determine what leadership styles, processes, and approaches will work in a given situation. In regard to the group environment, the student will focus on understanding what the stated goals (mission) of the group, organization and/or community is, what their history is, and how/why are they structured the way that they are. Students will use the knowledge of their organizational culture to identify different (and/or competing) interests or goals that exist within the organization and how the group differentiates itself and/or creates its identity relative to other groups. As a result, they will be able to identify who the key decision-makers and networks are.

In regard to the overall system of the organization, the student will gain an understanding of the processes and structures that connect the different groups and subgroups within the community/organization. Students will be able to know whether or not their groups’ members continually exchange feedback among their various parts to assure alliance with overall shared goals. By being knowledgeable in this area, students will be able to understand why a problem occurs and/or persists and therefore work to better understand the part in relation to the whole. Students, in sum, will be able to identify new ways in which the group can work together to realize shared goals by seeing the bigger picture, and understanding the role that their group plays within that context.

Skills: strategy development, buy-in, advocacy, risk and opportunity assessment, critical reasoning, community

D. Leadership is Purposeful
This principle focuses on the student working to create their own personal vision and being able to identify what issues, organizations or communities that are most important to them and why. Students will have the opportunity to ask themselves, when they are the most energized and focused, what are they working on? What sorts of things would they do for free? Students will be able to develop an understanding of what it would mean to have their (group, a context, setting, relationship, or cause/issue) any way that they wanted and describe what that would look like. Once they have developed this understanding, should be able to establish and communicate a shared vision with their larger group.

By establishing a shared vision, student leaders will be able to effectively engage in conversation with their constituents in what the future could look like and what are the possibilities for positive change; for example, how do the groups’ goals overlap and how can shared goals within the group be maximized and leveraged? Students should be able to understand the importance of and understand the role optimism has in motivating themselves and others while working towards a shared goal.

Skills: Mission/vision/goal setting, assessment, reflection, decision-making

E. Leadership is Transformational
This principle carries the purpose forward whereas students are able to organize effectively for action. Students should be able to break their big vision down into actionable steps and identify the big pieces that need to be tackled and prioritize those steps to into manageable ones. In regard to setting manageable steps, leaders should also establish a timeline as to when they would like to see progress and results. Along with their team, students will be able to identify tactics and things they are actually going to do in order to achieve that goal, and also identify any obstacles that may prevent them from meeting deadlines and/or making progress. In doing this,
students will consider who will be impacted by the change they wish to implement, as well what reactions (positive or negative) that they might be able to anticipate. Students should also be able to identify what “success” will look like; what does it mean for them to achieve their goal?

By understanding the impact of their change, students need to be able to comprehend and communicate what is made different by their change and what legacy they want to leave in regard to this particular passion. In order to keep team members on task in regard to progress, the leader will need to consider what will make the ideas/group sustainable over time and keep up momentum of the progress toward a shared goal.

Global perspective, innovation, follow-through, big picture design, resourcefulness

**F. Leadership is Experiential/Action**

This principle focuses on leadership in action; how does one’s experimentation in their field of passion make for an opportunity to build upon leadership skills? What action does one take that ensures that actions are moral and ethical in nature? Under this principle, the leader is focused on the “doing”, and the art of experimentation and innovation. Here, through experimentation and action within the field, the student engages in action-oriented tasks (such as a service project or team sport) to best engage leadership skills; these actions are led by the students’ identified values and defined ethical and moral actions.

**Skills:** Service, personal empowerment, learning-through-doing, social justice, ethical decision-making, innovative thought