

Studying Leadership Development

Assessment Brief #6, Feb/March, 2016

Overview

Colleges and universities have claimed to produce leaders for generations, and UC Merced is no different. Okay, we have only been at this for a decade... But we called the first students “Pioneers” and we talk now about students as “Citizens” and “Engaged Leaders” and one of our seven Student Learning Outcomes is Increasing Capacity for Leadership and Teamwork. So, this assessment brief will include some of our attempts to measure leadership development in the Division of Student Affairs. Leadership can be a “squishy” concept with more than 300 different documented definitions of leadership (Rost, 1991). In 2012, staff in our Division came together to do some training for student “leaders” who were really students employed within the Division of Student Affairs such as Resident Advisers, H.E.R.O.E.S., and interns in various offices. This quickly developed into the Collaborative Leadership Training (CLT). We have some assessment evidence to share from each year of the CLT, which in Year 1 was based on Kouzes and Posner’s *The Leadership Challenge* (2007) but switched in Year 2 to the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (1996) as a guiding framework.

Learning Outcomes

- Students who work in the Division of Student Affairs will:
 - Be able to explain the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM);
 - Be able to articulate the SCM’s relevance to their work in the co-curriculum;
 - Define themselves as change agents, on campus or in our community.

Methods

Each year of the CLT, we attempted to assess the outcomes of the August experience and the on-going leadership development of the participants, with mixed results.

Year 1: A pre-test/post-test strategy, using Kouzes & Posner’s instrument *The Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI), which measures the five behaviors of their model, yielded declining results. Meaning, the students (on average) rated themselves higher on the five practices on the pretest (administered before the day-long training) than they rated themselves on the post-test afterwards. So, by participating in the experiential activities, did they “unlearn” these practices or did they gain a more realistic sense of their abilities in those five areas and submit more realistic (and subsequently lower) score in the post-test? See the results in Table 1. We found the measurement design problematic but kept trying, in the spirit of continuous improvement and learning.

Year 2: Reacting to the disappointing reduction in leadership scores on the LPI, we conducted what was referred to as a “reflective evaluation” at the end of the training day. CLT participants were asked to reflect on and evaluate their skills and knowledge at the beginning of the training compared to the end of the experience. We calculated the “gain” in scores between these self-reported “before” and “after” scores, using a scoring methodology that allowed us to differentiate the “before” score from the “after” score to determine the growth attributable to the training. The results are presented below in Table 2.

Year 3: By this point, the CLT experience included some participants who were exposed to the SCM the previous year, so attributing growth to the activities of the CLT day was getting more complicated. However, we realized at the end of the training in Year 2 that students were spontaneously asked to write down their current working definition of leadership, and we inadvertently collected those definitions! SO, in Year 3, we **deliberately** collected “pretest” leadership definitions for first time participants and collected “post test” definitions from returning staff participating for their second time. The CLT Steering committee designed a rubric to score change over time in those leadership definitions. Committee members worked together to calibrate and score the definitions. The comparison of the scores and the results of the analyses are found in Table 3.

Year 4: This is actually the third year of using the Social Change Model, so we are able to compare some results of CLT assessments. Here, we compiled and shared the Values Sorting results to begin to look for trends.

Results

TABLE 1: Percentage Change from Pre-test to Post-test Self-scores of Leadership Practices Inventory in 2012

Student	Time Frame	MODEL	INSPIRE	CHALLENGE	EMPOWER	ENCOURAGE	Cumulative △
A	August	23	19	26	25	26	
	May	23	22	23	23	27	
	% △	0%	14%	-13%	-9%	4%	-1%
B	August	22	21	20	22	24	
	May	22	21	20	22	24	
	% △	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
C	August	23	18	19	23	24	
	May	18	19	18	27	21	
	% △	-28%	5%	-6%	15%	-14%	-6%
D	August	22	22	22	25	24	
	May	21	16	20	23	25	
	% △	-5%	-38%	-10%	-9%	4%	-11%
E	August	21	22	23	20	17	
	May	23	23	27	22	19	
	% △	9%	4%	15%	9%	11%	9%
F	August	21	17	17	29	29	
	May	21	21	19	26	30	
	% △	0%	19%	11%	-12%	3%	4%

In the above table, each student is listed along with their scores for the five leadership behaviors from the survey administered in August and again in May. The percentage of change between the results from August and May are listed in the final row for each student leader. The last column identifies each student leader’s total *percentage increase or decrease*. The goal was to have every student increase by 10%, only one student (“E” increased by 9%) was close to reaching the goal.

TABLE 2: Highest Percentage of Gains (identified upon reflection) by CLT 2013 Participants

CONCEPT	PERCENTAGE OF GREATEST GAIN*
I understand the Social Change Model	43%
I am confident I will use the SCM in my work	33%
I understand Congruence	26%
I understand Citizenship	25%
I understand Controversy with Civility	23%
I am able to articulate my core values	21%
I understand Consciousness of Self	20%

*Greatest Gain means respondent “Disagreed” in the morning and “Strongly Agreed” in the afternoon, after the CLT experience.

CONCEPT	LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF GAIN**
I understand the Social Change Model	91%
I understand Citizenship	84
I understand Consciousness of Self	80
I understand Congruence	80
I understand Controversy with Civility	78
I will use the SCM in my work	77

I can articulate my core values	68
I know how to create positive change	64
I understand Common Purpose	56
I understand Collaboration	52
I understand Commitment	52
I believe I can make an impact in community	48

** Gain includes both Greatest Gain and Some Gain responses. Again, Greatest Gain means respondent "Disagreed" in the morning and then "Strongly Agreed" in the afternoon. Some Gain means respondent either "Disagreed" in the morning and "Agreed" in the afternoon OR "Agreed" in the morning and "Strongly Agreed" in the afternoon, after the CLT experience.

TABLE 3: Statistical Analysis of Two-Year Leadership Definitions, 2-Tailed Paired t-tests

SCM "C" Concept	Year 1 Mean	Year 1 SD	Year 2 Mean	Year 2 SD	Mean Difference	t-score	P value	Statistically Significant?
Consciousness of Self	1.21	.45	1.26	.49	.06	0.6511	0.5179	No
Collaboration	1.38	.53	1.55	.61	.17	1.5891	0.1181	No
Common Purpose	1.30	.54	1.47	.61	.17	1.5891	0.1181	No
Total	3.89	1.03	4.28	1.13	.40	2.1607	0.0353	Yes

N=53, P<.05

TABLE 4: Most Frequent Responses to Value Sorting by 2015 CLT Participants by Track

Value	Track 1 (N=216)	Value	Track 2 (N=66)	Value	Track 3 (N=23)	Value	Total (N=305)
Family	99	Family	29	Family	11	Family	139
Respect	48	Compassion	19	Honesty	8	Respect	72
Education	46	Respect	17	Respect	7	Education	60
Positivity	45	Growth	11	Faith	7	Positivity	58
Growth	43	Positivity	11	Integrity	6	Growth	57
Honesty	41	Leadership	11	Reliability	5	Honesty	56
Humor	35	Humor	11	Caring	4	Compassion	48
Integrity	32	Education	11	Growth	3	Integrity	47
Learning	29	Integrity	9	Leadership	3	Humor	46
Adventure	27	Loyalty	8	Education	3	Faith	39

Track 1 includes students doing CLT for first time, Track 2 responses from returners, and Track 3 includes third time participants.

TABLE 5: Most Frequent Values Sorting Responses from 2014 and 2015 CLT Participants

Top Ten Values 2014 Cohort	Top Ten Values 2015 Cohort
Family	Family
Respect	Respect
Growth	Education
Honesty	Positivity
Faith	Growth
Integrity	Honestly
Positivity	Compassion
Service	Integrity
Leadership	Humor
Responsibility	Faith

Conclusions & Recommendations

The Collaborative Leadership Training, started in 2012, has grown to include over 300 students with 48 professional staff from 13 units across campus serving as facilitators in 2015. Each year, the CLT Steering Committee strives to assess the learning that happens that day in the Gallo gym, trying different strategies and learning from our annual attempts at data collection and analysis. What have we learned? It might be safe to say that our best chance is to collect direct evidence and not depend on student self-reported data to measure leadership skills. We also learned that a majority of students report better understanding of the SCM after the training and their personal definitions of leadership change over the year between the CLT experiences. The student responses to the value sorting activity confirm what many student affairs professionals know about the UCM student population: Family and Respect are paramount to their personal value systems.

This summer will be the fifth iteration of the CLT, these assessments have led to the following recommendations:

- Direct evidence is preferred;
- Pre/Post or Before/After measures for an experience lasting several hours does not appear to be sufficient exposure to create demonstrable growth or change;
- The “one shot” experience could be supplemented by on-going reflection, discussion and intervention by supervisors;
- The on-going commitment of supervisors must be valued, even incentivized, to ensure follow through and consistent investment of time and energy to promote growth and learning.

Citations

Higher Education Research Institute. (1996). *A social change model of leadership development guidebook. Version III*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rost, J.C. (1991). *Leadership for the 21st century*. New York, NY: Praeger.