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**Leadership Development – For What Purpose?**

For as long as I can remember, “leadership” was a quality that I had always pursued. In fourth grade, I ran for class representative with dreams to change the St. Joseph Catholic Grade School’s policy that banned students from drinking pop at lunch. The injustices we suffered! The administration denied my proposal on the grounds that rowdy students did not need more sugar on a daily basis. However, they did allow the students to drink pop on Fridays. I achieved my first attempt at change. In high school, I became obsessed with enacting change through Habitat for Humanity. My life became organizing fundraisers, selling tickets, and spending a week out of my summer building homes for people. As I begin my study of leadership theory, I can’t help but wonder “Am I a leader?”

Personally, I believe that a “leader” is someone who enacts positive change. Leaders are good followers- they know their strengths and weaknesses. Also, positions of authority are not synonymous with leadership roles. Presidents, CEOs, and Prime Ministers, while influential, do not necessarily practice leadership. Further, anyone can practice leadership. However, the way different people go about this practice varies.

**Personal Values and Mission**

The leadership skills I develop and the leadership roles that I hope to take on reflect my core values. A core value is what is most important to an individual. Some people value money, friendship, or the respect of others. Core values shape peoples personalities. A strong set of core values is essential to leadership. Leaders need to use their values to make tough decisions. A core value is something in which a person wholeheartedly believes. Leaders need strong beliefs and convictions. They know that if they do not stand for something, they will fall for anything.

My first core value is happiness. It is a core value because it guides everything I do. I base decisions on whether or not I will be happy with the outcome. I am also very determined because of my constant strive to achieve happiness. I will never settle for anything less than happiness.

I am most happy when I am achieving. I get a sense of pride out of knowing I have done a good job. I thrive on recognition from others when they see that I have completed a task well. When I am happy, I am productive. When I enjoy what I am doing, my potential is limitless. I know I am capable of achieving great things. I, therefore, owe it to myself and to the world to be happy in what I do.

As a leader, I realize the potential happy people have. One study performed by the Gallup Organization has found that eight out of every ten people are unhappy with their work. If more people could find happiness in their work, the output possibilities are endless. As a leader, I try to motivate people to be happy with their work. I try to recognize people’s talents and assign them corresponding tasks.

My second core value is friendship. Someone once told me to “surround yourself with the people that bring out the best in you.” Therefore, I choose my friends wisely. My close group of friends motivate me to be a better person. They form a support system that I know will never let me down. I value this close relationship.

Good friends are honest. My friends know that I will always give them an honest opinion. I do not like gossip, lying, or cheating because I believe no positive end can come of it. In return, I trust that they tell me the truth. Taking honest criticisms from others helps me to grow to be person I know I can be. This relationship of trust and honesty is essential to leadership.

It is important for followers to have faith in their leader. Followers need to believe in the common goal and believe that the leader knows the best way of achieving that goal. When followers believe in the goal, they will work harder to achieve it. As a leader, I value personal relationships. I like collaborating with groups to complete a task. I like organizing other people’s ideas to create the best plan to achieve a goal. I value each person’s input, and I am not afraid to give honest opinions. When I am trying to accomplish a goal, I surround myself with the people who bring out the best in each other.

My third core value is service. I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. I have been given many good things in my life: family, friends, a house, and an education. When I see people who are less fortunate than me, it is not enough for me to feel guilty. Instead, I feel like I need to act. For example, during my freshman year of college, I took a class that taught about Hurricane Katrina and the current state of the people of New Orleans. I was horrified to learn that these people live in squalor years after the storm. I was motivated to combat their poverty. During my Spring Break, I went to New Orleans to build with Habitat for Humanity.

This sense of service is driven by empathy. I can understand what other people are feeling and help them voice these emotions. I can feel others’ emotions as if their emotions were my own.

Service and empathy are core values for leaders. Leaders are the people who motivate others to achieve a greater end. I shudder to think what our world would be like without service-minded leaders such as Mother Theresa, Jimmy Carter, and Princess Diana. Empathy allows leaders to anticipate need. Leaders need to see all perspectives of problems in order to solve them. Service and empathy are at the heart of true leadership.

In light of these values, my personal mission statement is to, first, find a job that I am passionate about and that will challenge me. Mostly, I want to be able to help people and make a difference in their lives. These values of happiness and service will be further reflected in my family life. I hope to be:

**Honest**

**Achieving**

**Positive**

**Helpful to others**

**Family**

## **Who I Am Now As A Leader**

I have two strengths that help me in my practices of leadership. I have always believed that one of my strengths is being sociable. On playgrounds, when I was younger, I would befriend other children I did not know. When I walk to class, I make eye contact with everyone I pass and smile at them. It makes me happy to know that my smile may make someone else happy. Two weeks ago, I began a conversation with the woman who cleans the bathrooms in my residence hall. It is obvious that I can consistently repeat my social skills and derive a sense of contentment from it.

Sociability, relationship building, is a leadership quality. A leader needs to initiate and maintain the leader-follower relationship. A leader's duty is to motivate a group of people to work toward a common goal. Good personal skills make it possible for a group to work together toward this goal. Social skills make it possible for leaders to work with peers, subordinates, and superiors to accomplish the common goal.

The Strengthsquest assessment confirmed that people skills are my strengths. Three of my five strengths directly dealt with sociability: individualization, empathy, and "woo." I win others over, establish relationships, sense the emotions of others around me, and understand people. I know that, because this is one of my talents, I can improve upon it. I need to constantly look for new opportunities to meet strangers and converse with them. I need to learn the art of small talk. I need to learn how to use my charisma to make quick and lasting impressions. If I can learn these through meeting many new people, I will improve my ability to "woo." In my classes, I want to establish relationships with my peers (other students) and superiors (professors and teaching assistants). This networking will be of great help to me. Meeting many of my peers on a diverse campus can be educational. I will become multiculturally competent and aware of the differences that exist between different demographics of people. I will learn how to relate to and motivate different kinds of people.

Another strength is that I am an achiever. I have incredible determination, and can often be found at the library studying for hours. I never settle for good enough. Even if I have A in my class, I strive to get an A+. After running in my first 5 kilometer race, I wanted to challenge myself to run a half marathon. I have begun training and will run in the Spring. I set a goal, and I achieved it.

Many researchers agree that determination is a leadership trait. The results of the Big Five Personality Profile and Leadership Trait Questionnaire confirmed that I am determined. The Big Five showed that I was strongest in "Conscientiousness"- an achievement trait. The LTQ showed that I was trustworthy and dependable-determination traits.

Leaders need to be determined. They have a vision and they must inspire others to reach that goal. It provides leaders with an intense energy to work long hours and start new tasks.

There are many qualities that leaders have. Although I can work on these strengths that I already possess, I need to develop other leadership traits.

## **Who I hope to be: My Learning Goals**

- **Self-Awareness**
  - Complete the ECI-U 360° Review to learn about myself.
- **Self-management**
  - Journal about my emotions to understand how they affect myself and those around me and manage them
- **Relationship Building**
  - To develop lasting relationships with the people on my study abroad program.
- **Communication Skills**
  - Work as a Campus Tour Guide and cater my tour presentations to the different people in the tour group.
- **Ethical Practices**
  - Go to the I-Program, Integrity to learn about staying true to my values and leading in an ethical way.
- **Team Development**
  - Trust the members of a group project I am involved in. Instead of taking on all of the group's responsibilities, I will rely on the other members and we will all collaborate.
- **Leading Change**
  - Petition the College of Business to allow Business Minors to use the job database, Simplicity.
- **Project and Program Effectiveness**
  - Obtain an internship, Summer, Graf, or Turner Fellowship, and work on a project that is important to the organization.
- **Systems Thinking**
  - Attend the I-Program Ignite
- **Community Building**
  - Take an active role in facilitating lasting relationships and networks among members of the Student Alumni Ambassadors.
- **Sustaining Leadership**
  - Take the course "Leading Sustainable Change" to learn to create change and make it stable and long-lasting.

1. **To find a confidence in my decision making.**

I have immense difficulty making decisions because I lack confidence in my judgment making abilities. Decisions as simple as choice of ice cream flavor can be laborious. Even after I have eaten the ice cream, I am not sure I made the right choice. Decision-making is an essential leadership skill. A leader has to constantly make decisions about movement towards the goal. Without confidence, it becomes difficult to convince people to believe in your goal. Jim Loehr said it best when he said "With confidence, you can reach truly amazing heights. Without confidence, even the simplest accomplishments are beyond your grasp."

The first time I found a confidence in my abilities was when I was a resident advisor in Garner Hall. I had to be confident, because my decisions mattered- often

in situations of life and death. I hope to achieve this goal by taking on tasks when my decisions matter.

**2. To become multi-culturally competent.**

Multicultural competence is understanding another's beliefs with respect to his or her culture. Because I come from an all-white community and an all-white high school, I am not multi-culturally competent. As a leader it is important that I become multi-culturally competent so that I can interact with people of all cultures.

I hope to achieve this goal by, first, educating myself. There are many resources on and off campus to aid me in learning. I can attend a cultural night or a lecture on diversity. Then, I will make a conscious effort to interact with people who are different from me, and put what I have learned into action. These interactions will be especially numerous when I study abroad. As I travel, I will meet people who are fundamentally different from me. I need to be bold and learn from them.