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LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

Implications for Leadership Development Programs

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Introduction

Higher education faces an unprecedented period of accelerating change that is driven by shifts in public attitudes, reductions in the level of public support, questions regarding higher education?s priorities, and demands for greater accountability. To respond effectively to the complex educational, social, political and economic concerns of society, higher education must develop a cadre of academic leaders who can engage the institution and its faculty/staff in change and transformation processes. One way to develop this potential is to create institutional leadership development opportunities in which faculty/staff can develop multi-dimensional perspectives, competence to meet the challenges of a constantly changing environment, the ability to think strategically and act collaboratively.

This article discusses the University of Wisconsin-Extension Administrative Leadership Program (EALP), a model leadership development program for faculty and staff in a variety of university extension settings including: Broadcasting and Media Innovations; Business and Manufacturing Education; Continuing Education; and, Cooperative Extension. The article describes how the program integrates theoretical and applied knowledge about leadership into the curriculum along with the development of specific leadership competencies and abilities. Finally, the article illustrates the outcomes of the leadership development program as perceived and described by both the participants and their supervisors.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Administrative Leadership Program (EALP)

The University of Wisconsin-Extension (UW-Extension) is one of the fifteen University of Wisconsin System institutions and is the link between the people of Wisconsin and the extraordinary body of

knowledge within the statewide public university system. Faculty and staff within the University of Wisconsin-Extension are dedicated to applying and delivering university research, knowledge and resources to meet the educational needs of Wisconsin people, wherever they live and work (UW-Extension Annual Report, 2001).

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has developed and implemented a leadership development program for its faculty and staff?the Extension Administrative Leadership Program (EALP). Since its beginning a decade ago, approximately 130 faculty and staff from the UW-Extension have participated in the program. The participants have come from all four divisions of UW-Extension, including Broadcasting and Media Innovations, Business and Manufacturing, Continuing Education, and Cooperative Extension.

In 1992, the original design of EALP was based on developing knowledge about the institution and the context in which it operates, as well as certain technical and managerial skills (e.g., hiring, budgeting, etc.). Gradually however, a paradigmatic shift occurred, and the program began to emphasize the development of specific leadership competencies in the context of the unique political, social, and economic realities of higher education today. Thus, EALP was redesigned to develop the knowledge, abilities and attitudes essential for effective leadership performance in higher education settings.

To effectively integrate the development of leadership skills, it became essential to identify those competencies necessary for effective leadership in higher education. According to Klemp (1979), the term ?competence? implies an ability or characteristic of the person that can be transferred to and demonstrated in a variety of situations. Klemp defines a competence as a generic knowledge, skill, trait, or motive of a person that is causally related to effective behavior, and must be manifested in a variety of ways in a number of situations. The term ?causally related? means that there is evidence which indicates or suggests that possession of the characteristic (e.g., knowledge, skill, trait, or motive) precedes and leads to effective performance (Klemp, 1979). That is to say, competence precedes effective performance.

Leadership Competence Model

A competence model is a functional categorization of separate competencies that tend to occur simultaneously in situations where effective performance is demonstrated. A research study was conducted (Wisniewski, 1999) to generate descriptive categories of higher education leadership competencies using a grounded theory methodology. Through the use of a critical incident technique, participants in EALP were asked to recollect personal leadership experiences in which they were effective and to describe what they actually did to make their performance effective. In this way, the data were in a behaviorally specific form.

To identify the leadership competencies from the critical incidents, each of the 54 incidents generated were read, and the behaviors were categories and analyzed. A total of 26 leadership abilities emerged from this data. The abilities were causally related to effective outcomes in the incidents and grounded in specific behaviors. The abilities were then grouped to form competence categories. Thorough analysis of the data eventually resulted in a list of seven competencies for leadership in higher education.

Higher Education Leadership Competencies and Related Abilities

The higher education leadership competencies and the related abilities that were generated by the research included:

Development of a Core Set of Values and Vision

- The ability to clearly identify the values and beliefs upon which one?s actions are based

- The ability and willingness to act on one?s beliefs

- The ability to develop a clear direction for the future and strategies for bringing about necessary changes

Effective Communication

a. Listening

- The ability to identify the unspoken problem that lies beneath the surface of verbal communication

- The ability to consider multiple perspectives

b. Speaking and Writing

- The ability to use language which is clear, direct, honest, and respectful

- The ability to depersonalize the problem/situation?to state it in objective terms

- The ability and willingness to provide an explanation for decisions made

- The ability to utilize appropriate metaphors and analogies

- The ability to communicate in multiple forums (memos, newsletters, interpersonal interactions, formal meetings)

Reflection and Analysis

- The ability to step back, observe the situation, identify the multiplicity of issues, and interpret the underlying dynamics

- The ability to assimilate and accommodate new information

Creating a Positive Climate

- The ability to interact comfortably with a diverse variety of people, including gender, age, ethnicity, etc.

- The ability to establish a high-trust environment

- The ability to develop a sense of empathy

- The ability to motivate and inspire others

Facilitation and Collaboration

- The ability to share responsibility and authority with others

- The ability to identify potential relevant common interests

- The ability to create opportunities for people to form partnerships through shared knowledge

- The ability to form teams that understand the vision and strategies

Problem Solving and Risk Taking

- The ability to examine situations from a variety of perspectives

- The ability to encourage people to both generate and share new ideas, and to explore potential solutions and their consequences

- The ability to involve people in making critical decisions

- The ability to demonstrate a willingness to propose direction and action

Perseverance

- The ability to carry on despite ambiguity, frustration and chaos

- The ability to continue steadily on course in spite of barriers.

These seven competencies and related abilities form a competence model for effective leadership in higher education. The following section will consider how these competencies have been integrated into leadership development program for faculty/staff in higher education.

Implications for Leadership Development in Higher Education

Based on research and a review of leadership program models (Conger, 1996; Nevins and Stumpf, 1999, Wisniewski, 1999), it was determined that leadership programs should integrate the following components: knowledge about the structure and culture of the organization; a study of different theories of leadership; the opportunity for participants to develop and demonstrate key leadership competencies; the development of a personal philosophy of leadership which requires individuals to reflect on their core values, assumptions, and beliefs regarding leadership; and, a variety of active learning experiences including small group discussions and presentations, interviews, simulations, role playing, in-basket exercises, and nominal group activities.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Administrative Leadership Program incorporates all of the above components. Throughout a series of twelve two-day sessions over the course of two calendar years, a group of approximately 25 participants engages in a variety of active learning experiences. They have multiple opportunities to interact with their colleagues and other leaders in the University of Wisconsin-System and the University of Wisconsin-Extension, to enhance their understanding of various leadership theories, to practice relevant leadership skills and abilities, and to receive feedback on their performance.

A brief outline of the curriculum for the 12 sessions, including the topic, the content, the key competence to be developed within the content focus, and examples of related learning experiences, is provided in the following paragraphs.

Session 1

Content: Philosophical Foundations of Leadership

Key Competence: Development of a Set of Core Values and Vision

Learning Experiences: The importance of the development of a personal philosophy of leadership in higher education is established. Throughout their involvement in EALP, participants are continuously engaged in a process of examining their values and beliefs. They are challenged to reflect on and write about the individual assumptions, values, and beliefs in response to a series of questions raised by Apps in his book, Leadership for the Emerging Age: Transforming Practice in Adult and Continuing Education (1994). These short, written reflections are shared with small group members and with the facilitator for feedback and the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives. In the initial session, participants are also introduced to key leadership theorists and some of their concepts (eg., Covey, Kotter, Heifetz, Bennis, Wheatley, Matsushita, etc.).

Session 2

Content: Leadership in Higher Education: Vision and Values

Key Competence: Development of a Set of Core Values and Vision

Learning Experiences: Participants engage in both large and small group interview of UW-System and UW-Extension leaders to identify and analyze explicit, implicit and inferred values and beliefs.

Session 3

Content: Developing Leadership Capacity: Initiating Change in Higher Education

Key Competence: Development of a Set of Core Values and Vision

Learning Experiences: John Kotter?s (1996) eight-step process for leading change is presented; participants apply the eight-step process for creating a blueprint for a major change in their higher education institution.

Session 4

Content: Creating a Shared Vision

Key Competence: Development of a Set of Core Values and Vision

Learning Experiences: Participants examine and analyze several academic institutional vision and value statements; they learn how to develop a shared vision for their organizations and examine some strategies for producing the critical changes.

Session 5

Content: Strategic Thinking and Planning

Key Competence: Development of a Set of Core Values and Vision

Learning Experiences: Participants practice environmental scanning techniques in which they identify institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They learn key elements of developing organizational mission statements, goals, strategies and performance measures.

Session 6

Content: Communicating Change

Key Competence: Effective Communication

Learning Experience: Participants explore various means of communicating information with persons who are both physically located in the same time and place as well as with persons who are not co-located. Communication venues include: meetings, forums, newsletters, e-mail, facsimile machines, and other technologies such as video conferencing and even satellite. Participants actually engage in meetings conducted via video conferencing to assess the technology?s effectiveness. Participants discuss the most appropriate communication venue depending on the audience, the urgency of the message, the content of the message, and the type of interaction to be generated by the message.

Session 7

Content: Team Building

Key Competence: Facilitation and Collaboration

Learning Experiences: Team building concepts and skills are introduced and practiced in large and small group settings.

Session 8

Content: Social, Environmental, Political, and Economic Issues Facing Leaders in Higher Education

Key Competence: Facilitation and Collaboration

Learning Experience: Participants examine the major social, environmental, political and economic

trends in which higher education is immersed. Afterwards, they engage in a simulation in which they collaborate with a team of 5-6 colleagues to create a new educational program. They also create a hypothetical television interview–occurring five years in the future–in which they describe the new program. Team members take on different roles as they prepare their interview for ?broadcast?? television interviewer/moderator, chancellor, dean, faculty coordinator, and community partner or community participant served by the new program. The hypothetical television interviews are videotaped and analyzed.

Session 9

Content: Facilitating a Positive Climate

Key Competence: Creating a Positive Climate

Learning Experiences: Participants experience a variety of activities which enhance their appreciation of diversity and which develop their repertoire of culturally-responsive leadership styles.

Session 10 and 11

Content: Leadership Challenges in Higher Education

Key Competences: Reflection and Analysis; Perseverance

Learning Experiences: Participants each describe an important leadership challenge which they are facing in their work which will have an impact on the performance or success of their institution over the next several years. Participants share their leadership challenges in small groups to discuss alternative possibilities and perspectives and to receive advice on reframing or addressing their challenge.

Session 12

Content: Contributions to Leadership in Higher Education

Key Competence: Reflection and Analysis; Perseverance

Learning Experiences: Participants reflect on and share their personal philosophies of leadership through the use of symbols. They demonstrate the development of their leadership skills through various in-basket and role playing exercises.

Outcomes of the Extension Administrative Leadership Program

The EALP curriculum integrates knowledge of the academic institution and the context in which it operates with the practice of leadership abilities that were identified in a previous study of leaders in higher education (Wisniewski, 1999). To assess the outcomes of participation in the program and to evaluate the program?s overall success, a survey was sent in the fall of 2001 to all of the past and current participants (approximately 130) of EALP as well as to each of their supervisors.

The questions in the participant?s survey included:

- Why did you choose to participate in EALP?

- What did you gain from your experience in the program?

- What skills/abilities have you developed from your experience in the program?

- What has happened to you personally and/or professional that you can attribute to your EALP experience?

- Other comments regarding the program

In all, 193 responses were generated from these questions.

The questions in the supervisor?s survey were similar and included:

- Why, from your perspective, did this individual choose to participate in EALP?

- What, from your perspective, did this individual gain from his/her experience in the program?

- How has your office, department, district or division gained from this individual?s participation in EALP?

- What skills/abilities has the participant demonstrated that you can attribute to his/her participation in EALP?

- From your perspective, what has happened to this individual personally and/or professional that you can attribute to their EALP experience?

- Other comments regarding the program

A total of 144 supervisors? responses were generated by these questions.

The outcomes as identified in both the participants? and the supervisors? responses to the survey are perhaps best framed in relationship to the seven leadership competencies that were previously described.

Development of a Core Set of Values and Vision

Participants and their supervisors indicated that, as a result of the program, the participants have a clearer understanding of their individual leadership styles and how to apply their leadership strengths in multiple situations. Specific comments related to this competence included the following:

- ?I?ve identified my espoused leadership values and compared them to my behavior (theory in action). I know where the gaps are and how to reconcile those gaps.?

- ?I?ve reflected on and written my general leadership principles; I know where I?m coming from and where I want to go.?

- ?EALP has helped me examine my beliefs and develop a core from which to work. This has helped me immeasurably in determining which projects and relationships to place the most emphasis upon.?

- ?I now see the importance of having a mission statement and making sure everyone in the work group has the same vision to achieve the outcomes.?

- ?As his supervisor, I can say that [the participant] has a much clearer understanding of our organization?s vision, mission and goals in addition to an understanding of their importance to the organization.?

- ?[The participant] has a clear purpose and a plan; he operates from a personal leadership philosophy of values and beliefs based on fundamental principles.?

Communication

Speaking, writing, and listening skills were identified as important outcomes of the program. Both participants and their supervisors indicated indisputable growth in communication skills as demonstrated in the following comments:

- ?Through participation in EALP, I was able to work through a paralyzing fear of public speaking which was holding me back personally and professionally. Through the class activities and the support of the group, I was able to overcome this obstacle, and my fear is gone. I?ve given many effective presentations since.?

- ?I have used the writing assignments to gain a better understanding of leadership and how I might apply the skills in my current position.?

- ?I?ve become a better listener and use active listening techniques. I?m more empathetic and take time to see a situation from others? perspectives.?

- ?[The participant] appears to be more receptive to others, more confident in expressing ideas, and more confident in finding ways to implement them.?

- ?Department-wide discussions were enhanced by [the participant?s] broader understanding of Extension and her willingness to share her thoughts in a meaningful way.?

Reflection and Analysis

Taking time to reflect on and analyze situations was identified as an important programmatic outcome by a number of participants. Many stated that they are now more likely to step back to look at the ?big picture? before making decisions.

- ?Reflection and analysis go hand in hand with values and vision for me. Compared to one year ago, I more often find myself pausing in various situations to think about whether I am behaving in a way that reflects my values and vision. I find myself taking a more in-depth look at situations to be more objective, rather than being influenced by my subjective coloring of the

situation.?

- ?One major outcome was learning to reflect on my actions in everyday life. I tended to reflect about how I might have done something differently? when the action was over. I now find myself spending more time reflecting before an activity? thinking about the possible outcomes and consequences and my role in them.?

- ?I can more easily step out of my shoes and see matters from a larger perspective. Looking at our organization from outside has helped me analyze our operation more effectively.?

- ?The program has helped [the participant] reflect on work from many different perspectives.?

- ?What I took away from the experience most was the knowledge that I needed more balance in my life? time for family; time for myself; time for others, not just time on the job.?

- ?I?ve begun to think of myself as a leader in settings other than the obvious (work). This has created a new awareness of the individual power to lead that we all possess.?

Creating a Positive Climate

The program has helped participants develop their abilities to establish a high-trust environment, to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and to listen and respond to others with empathy.

- ?The diversity activities helped me think about who I am as a person. But, more importantly, it helped me become aware of the differences in others and how those differences affect leadership and communication styles.?

- ?I learned how to create a ?safe place? and work at creating a positive climate, even when I don?t think it?s my responsibility.?

- ?An overall benefit of EALP is that it has shown me that I am part of a very diverse, rich organization. My feeling of connection to UW-Extension has always been vague; now, I feel a sense of true membership, collegiality, and pride.?

Facilitation and Collaboration

Central to this competence is the ability to create opportunities for people to form partnerships as well as the ability to create teams that understand the organization?s vision. Participants in the program indicated that their growth in this competence was particularly significant.

- ?Since participating in the program, I have developed a network of colleagues, and I?ve developed the ability to make connections more quickly. I can put effective teams together.?

- ?My mindset now is that collaboration is critical as resources are scarce and collaboration/innovation are essential for survival.?

- ?One year ago, I was very ?protective? of our academic program?its growth and survival?to the point that I was a bit of an isolationist who was less than enthusiastic about collaborating with other programs. While I still make maintaining program quality and meeting revenue goals a top priority, I?m now able to see ways to collaborate. I have learned to negotiate effectively so that our program does not lose in a collaboration. And, I can facilitate such collaborations with a positive attitude, rather than begrudgingly.?

- ?I work with a variety of people every day so I now see the importance of involving all people in projects. It takes skill to know when to step in and take over vs. stepping back.?

- ?[The participant] now doesn?t hesitate to participate in programs that are inter-departmental or cross-divisional.?

Problem-Solving and Risk Taking

A leader?s ability to generate and share new ideas, to explore potential solutions, and to make critical decisions demonstrates problem-solving and risk taking. Participants in the program felt they were better able to solve problems and take risks as demonstrated in the following comments.

- ?I feel that I am personally better prepared to live life to the fullest in my professional life. I am not afraid to try something new and perhaps fail. I try to learn from that experience.?

- ?EALP gave me the confidence to explore a new position within the institution. Both the organization and I benefited from the change.?

- ?I haven?t been afraid to initiate new professional experiences.?

- ?It is difficult to put into words all of the ways in which I benefited. Some of the growth is subtle, perhaps a new way of seeing a situation or a problem.?

- ?I?ve seen [the participant] demonstrate new ways of thinking?of ?breaking out of the box.??

- ?I?ve been able to risk sharing my disability with other leaders in the institution. That was a big threat for me. But I did it.?

Perseverance

Perseverance was seen as the ability to continue steadily on course, to carry on despite ambiguity, frustration and even chaos. Participants have demonstrated their ability to persevere in some of the following comments.

- ?I see myself moving from being ?dogged? to a more creative stubbornness!?

- ?EALP has helped me realize that struggle toward a goal is not unique to anyone?s circumstances!?

- ?I now tend to see projects through to the end. Perseverance to me means ?Hang in there!? I?ve learned to do that in my professional and personal life.?

- ?I?m operating in a different paradigm than I was in one year ago? and it?s incredibly exciting!?

Conclusion

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Administrative Leadership Program provides an opportunity for faculty and staff working in leadership roles across the University of Wisconsin-Extension to enhance leadership competence, gain a greater understanding of the broader educational institution and a better appreciation for the context in which it operates, develop networks with academic colleagues, and maximize effectiveness in current positions. The program is an experientially-based dynamic process in which it is important not only ?to know,? but also to reflect on and to apply knowledge. The opportunity to ?practice? leadership abilities in a safe, supportive environment with feedback from colleagues is fundamental to the program. EALP is a model leadership program in which participants do feel comfortable ?practicing? skills thus enhancing their overall competence, reflecting on their values and beliefs, sharing personal perspectives, listening to the views of others and thereby broadening their own perspectives, and working together to create a cadre of new leadership for university-based extension education.

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