The Methodist University Leadership Journey: Assessing Student Leadership Development Program

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Abstract

Can leadership be taught? It has been argued that while leadership training exists, it should have ended long ago. However, there is empirical research supporting the belief leadership skills, like any other skill, can be taught. The purpose of this field research is to present an overview of the Methodist University Leadership Journey program, examine students' rationale for participating, and their level of involvement in this cross-discipline leadership development program. Students engaged in the leadership development program (N=73) were sent an email questionnaire concerning their involvement in the program with 20 respondents (26%). Results indicated a wide range of reasons for participating along with ideas for improving the overall program.

Keywords: Leadership, Organizational Communication, Communication, Leadership Development, Leadership Training, Leadership Education

1. Introduction

"Instead of waiting for a leader you can believe in, try this: Become a leader you can believe in." (Stan Slap, 2013)

The Leadership Development Institute (March 2013) online notes the economy is centered on cutting costs. With companies laying-off employees, workers need increased job security. People need to learn to be valued and indispensible in the workplace. How? Developing oneself as an effective leader could be the answer. Become an irreplaceable employee. Go above and beyond. Do not assume someone else will pick up the slack when there is an absence of leadership. Be a proactive person. Become the person people turn to when leadership is needed. Learn to lead.

However, many have asked the question, "Can leadership be taught?" BTS Global Leader in Strategy Alignment and Execution (2013), a public consulting company traded at the OMX Nordic Exchange Stockholm, points to the empirical research of Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman whose work supports the belief leadership skills can be taught like any other skill (i.e., a person is not born with the ability to become a professional athlete, biochemical engineer, or piano virtuoso). BTS notes that an individual's personal characteristics can help or hinder leadership effectiveness; therefore, people need leadership development programs in order to become effective leaders.

At the core of an organization's success is its human resources; that is, its leadership. A *Forbes* (December 2012) online article indicates that according to the American Society of Training and Development, businesses in the United States spend more than $170 billion on leadership-based curricula. If leadership cannot be taught, then why do businesses spend so many dollars on leadership education?

2. Leadership Development versus Leadership Training

As stated above, there are those who have not been supportive of leadership education. For example, Myatt (2012) argues that "leadership training is alive and well, but it should have died long, long ago." He claims the leadership training industry is broken and has been for many years. He suggests we need to develop, not train leaders. Myatt's point is that leadership training is not leadership development; therefore, training fails to have a positive impact on the development of leaders. His concern is that training involves indoctrination on systems, processes, and techniques that are the right way to do things, that is, they are the best practices; however, Myatt believes such training is static and often filled with outdated information presented via a lecture format.

Myatt (2012) challenges those interested in leadership development saying, "If what you desire is a robotic, static thinker – train them. If you're seeking innovative, critical thinkers – develop them." Instead of training he encourages "coaching, mentoring, discipling, and developing future leaders because development is nuanced, contextual, collaborative, fluid, and above all else, actionable." According to Myatt, training merely seeks a norm while development goes beyond the norm. It focuses on techniques, content, and curricula rather than on the human element – people. Leadership development tests the courage of people, not their patience. Too often training has a present orientation, but leadership development looks to the future. Training is about standards while leadership development works to maximize people's potential. Leadership development is transformational in nature, not transactional. Training deals with maintenance of the status quo; leadership development deals with growth. Rather than develop individuals, training dwells on roles played by those in leadership positions. Leadership development educates; training indoctrinates. Training programs stifle an organization's cultural development. Trainers tend to encourage compliance without focusing on people's performance. Training is about being efficient, not necessarily being effective. Programs that train leaders often center on how to handle problems rather than how to discover solutions. Training is about the chain of command and its reporting lines while leadership development expands people's influence. Training programs are mechanical, putting people in boxes, but leadership development supports the intellectual growth of individuals to go beyond what is currently known to explore unknowns by taking people out of their comfort zones, thus moving them from the finite to the infinite possibilities that exist in the world.

3. Leadership Development Definition

So, what is leadership development? With new books being added each year there are more that 100,000 texts that seek to define leadership and leadership development. Walbeck (2012) states, "Leadership development refers to any activity that enhances the leadership qualities of individuals." Many would say leadership is composed of personal attributes such as charisma, communication skills, dynamism, instinct, and inspiration. But there is more; Good leaders can always be developed. Developing leaders is essential in the transformation of good leaders into great leaders. Therefore, leadership development is a vital ingredient in the success of any organization because such programming can be utilized to open up the potential of people so that they can become more capable of working with their supervisors, peers, and direct reports. Developmental programs can help people learn how to enhance their ability in guiding people, organizations, and most importantly, themselves.

BTS (2013) reports that through their work with clients and input from leading authorities they have identified several core assumptions concerning leadership development. According to BTS, "Leadership development expands the capacity of individuals to perform in leadership roles within organizations." Leadership facilitates the execution of a company's strategy through alignment, winning mindshare, and growing the capabilities of others. BTS suggests that "Leadership roles may be formal, with the corresponding authority to make decisions and take responsibility, or they may be informal roles with little official authority."

According to the Stanford University website (2013), research indicates that most people involved in developmental programs undergo a fundamental transformation by examining their BAV (belief, attitudes, values) system.

Such an examination typically involves a close look at their professional identities, roles, tasks, and the people they work with because leadership encompasses complex competencies and individual mindsets that affect the way people make sense of the world around them and their views concerning their roles and responsibilities.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this field research is to present an overview of the Methodist University Leadership Journey program, examine students' rationale for participating, and their level of involvement in this cross-discipline leadership development program. The study looks at reasons why students decided to participate in the program. Additionally, it identifies courses of study along with various types of on-campus leadership activities they were involved in. Finally, the research looks into various off-campus activities of the participants.

5. Methodist University Leadership Journey

To accomplish its mission the university has developed a multi-faceted program to assist students in their leadership development which they will need for their individual career choice and personal developmental needs. The purpose of the institution's ongoing endeavors is to provide its students with an effective leadership development program. The Journey is housed in the Tally Leadership Center. It is a collaborative program utilizing a variety of groups' activities on- and off-campus in order to develop current and future leaders.

Students committed to making a real difference in their communities and world have an avenue for personal development in the Leadership Journey through the Leadership Fellows Program. Students who are driven to acquire the knowledge, values, skills, and practical experiences that empower them for extraordinary leadership may become Leadership Fellows.

Methodist University is committed to the position that one of its most important endeavors is to provide its students with an effective leadership development program. To that end around 1993 several faculty held discussions about forming an organized effort and in 1995 the Tally Leadership Center was established. The Center has enjoyed several successful years preparing students for effective leadership.

When Dr. Ben E. Hancock, Jr., became president of the university he initiated his vision by establishing task forces focused on four pathways: (a) Leadership, (b) Community Engagement, (c) Global Education, and (d) Undergraduate Research and Creativity. As a result of the work of the various task forces the university's MU Journey Center was formed. As a part of this effort the Leadership Journey was established and founded on four principles: (a) All students can be effective leaders, (b) Effective leadership must be based on ethical values, (c) Effective leadership is collaborative, and (d) Effective leadership involves accomplishing positive change.

Under the co-direction of Dr. Andrew Ziegler and Mr. Bob McEvoy a taskforce composed of faculty and staff from across the campus worked to develop the Leadership Journey. The Leadership Fellows program was subsequently developed as a multi-faceted, cross-discipline program to assist students in their leadership development. The result was a program that includes: (a) Various elective courses in leadership, (b) A Leadership Studies Minor, (c) A Church Leadership Minor, (d) An Associate of Arts in Leadership and Management, (e) An Organizational Communication and Leadership Major, (f) A Leadership Fellows Program, (g) Internships, (h) Mentorships, (i) On- and off-campus community service activities, and, (j) Opportunities for conference participation.

The Leadership Journey begins in the students' first year and continues until graduation. It includes classroom and experiential learning. The program seeks to empower students by its focus on leadership assumptions, character, philosophies, and practices. *The Student Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner), *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey), and *The World's Most Powerful Leadership Principle: How to Become a Servant Leader* (Hunter) guide students in their understanding of effective leadership while mentorships, internships, and service to the campus and community allow students to reach their leadership potential.

Faculty and staff nominate first and second year students who they deem to have the interest, willingness, and potential to be successful in the leadership development program. Nominees receive an invitation letter which they complete and return to the Leadership Journey office. Afterward students receive a packet that provides information about various opportunities through the program.

Once they become a part of the program, they are designated as Leadership Fellows. The program provides students opportunities to develop their personal leadership potential through a two to three year process which usually begins in their second semester at the university, although occasionally sophomores may be nominated and enter the program. Leadership Fellows participate in required course work, guest lectures, workshops, off-campus conferences, internships, mentor relationships, and serve as on- and off-campus leaders. It is the university's belief that employers will recognize that Methodist University Leadership Fellows are among the very best graduates in the nation.

Leadership is the process of influencing others to accomplish common goals by providing purpose, direction, and motivation; therefore, the Leadership Journey is based on four foundational concepts, a set of values, desired leadership practices, and change. The foundational concepts assume that (a) all students can become effective leaders, (b) leadership is based on moral values, (c) leadership is based on exemplary practices, and (d) effective leadership brings about positive change with others. The identified core values of the program are commitment, respect, honesty, selflessness, kindness, and patience. Practices developed through the program include modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Finally, personal change is emphasized by being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, putting first things first, thinking win-win, seeking to understand others first, then being understood, synergizing, and sharpening the saw (Covey, 1989).

5.1 Academic Programs

Methodist University's current academic programs offer students the opportunity to complete an Associate of Arts in Leadership and Management, a Leadership Studies Minor, a Church Leadership Minor, a major in Business Administration, an Environmental and Occupational Management Major, or a Major in Organizational Communication and Leadership.

5.2 Core Requirements

The Leadership Journey Fellows program consists of a set of core requirements that include:

- Academic Foundation: Complete one or more courses through the Leadership Studies Minor offered by the Tally Leadership Center: LSS 3000 Principles of Leadership, LSS 3750 Future Oriented Leadership, LSS 3250 Theories and Techniques of Leadership, LSS 4600 Church Leadership, or LSS 3400 Issues in Contemporary Leadership.
- Specialized Training (on campus): Complete one or more of the following Leadership training opportunities: Student Leaders @ Methodist (SL@M), leadership minor (either Leadership Studies or Church Leadership), National Society for Leadership and Success (NSLS), or some combination of Leadership Studies Guest Speakers series or various leadership workshops.
- Specialized Training (off campus): Attend one or more of the following Leadership conferences: General Hugh Shelton Leadership Forum, North Carolina State University, Student Leadership & Diversity Conference, University of South Carolina, Virginia Student Leadership Conference, Randolph-Macon College, or NCAA Leadership Conference.
- Practical Leadership Experience (on campus): Serve as a leader or officer in one or more of the following: Intercollegiate sports team captain or co-captain, campus club, Student Government Association, sorority or fraternity president or vice president, resident assistant (RA), peer mentor, ROTC commander or executive officer.
- Practical Leadership Experience (off campus): Participate in one or more of the following opportunities: Study Abroad Experience, internship, off-campus Community Engagement Project Leader, ROTC Advanced Camp, or the Cumberland County-Fayetteville Institute for Community Leadership.
- Personal Leadership Portfolio: Compile certifications for the above items and include personal documents such as: Personal Mission Statement, Personal Leadership Philosophy, and Summaries of Key Leadership Traits and Skills.

Items other than those listed for each core requirement may be counted toward completion of a particular requirement. Faculty verification is required for each of the above. Two months before graduation, Fellows must apply in order to receive the Certificate of Completion.

Fellows who certify in all areas will receive a handsome certificate, credit on their co-curricular transcript, a graduation medallion, and recognition at the annual awards ceremony. Each year one or more Leadership Fellows are identified as Distinguished Leadership Fellows based on an evaluation of their participation that goes above and beyond the minimum requirements for the program.

6. Methodology

Students engaged in the Methodist University Leadership Journey development program (N=73) were sent an email questionnaire concerning their involvement in the program (see Table 1). The email was sent on April 14, 2014. A follow up request was not sent. Twenty participants (26% response rate) returned a completed questionnaire by the deadline of April 22, 2014.

Table 1: Student Classification	
First Year	4
Sophomore	11
Junior	4
Senior	1
Total	20

A self-developed questionnaire was created and reviewed by the Director and the Coordinator of the Leadership Journey. The questionnaire asked the students to identify their year in school along with open-ended questions including:

- Why did you decide to participate in the Leadership Fellows program?
- As a Leadership Fellows program participant, what have you learned about leadership?
- What do you like most about the Leadership Fellows program?
- What do you like least about the Leadership Fellows program?
- How will what you have learned help you in your future leadership roles?

In addition, the students were asked to identify from a drop down list the various leadership activities that they participated in by placing a mark by the items they were involved in (they were provided space to enter activities not provided on the drop down list):

- What leadership classes have you taken? (please put an X by all that apply)
- What extra-curricular activities have you held officer or other leadership positions in while a student at Methodist University? (please put an X by all that apply)
- What off-campus leadership positions have you held? (please put an X by all that apply)

7. Results

The following information provides the responses of the respondents to the six survey questions.

7.1 Why did you decide to participate in the Leadership Fellows Program?

Respondents had a wide variety of reasons for deciding to participate in the leadership program. A common response was that it provided opportunities for meeting others, getting involved on campus, and networking.

- "A good networking opportunity and a great way to become more involved."
- "It is a great opportunity to meet new people and get involved with campus organizations, as well as affiliate with leaders off campus."
- "To improve my leadership skills and allow for more networking opportunities."

Another common reason was to develop leadership skills.

- "I wanted to see what opportunities I could gain and ways that I could improve my leadership skills."
- "To expand my knowledge about the University as well as work on my leadership skills by attending workshops."
- "I felt that it was a great opportunity for me to try something new while in college. Because I am adding a Leadership minor to my college career, also I want to refine my leadership skills so that I can take on more leadership roles and be prepared for leadership roles once I graduate."
- "The program will help me develop my skills in dealing with others, which is essential to post-graduate life."

A pragmatic job search reason for joining the program was the resume building value of having participated in the program.

- "I thought it would be a great opportunity to not only participate in a good organization, but also meet great people along the way. I think it gives good opportunities and will also look good on a resume."
- "I thought that it would be a good opportunity to work on my leadership skills. It also looks good on a resume and my adviser recommended that I accept the invitation."
- "I thought it would be a good way to learn about becoming a good leader, and it is a resume booster."
- "I have always viewed myself as a leader, so I wanted to join an organization that would help me grow and develop into an even more efficient one. I also knew that it would look great on a resume."
- "I thought it would be a great opportunity to further my leadership skills and a good resume builder."

Of course, students chose to participate simply for the opportunity to gain leadership knowledge and experience to become a better, more effective leader.

- "More leadership experience and opportunities."
- "To learn how to become a leader and step out of my comfort zone."
- "I enjoyed the many opportunities it has to offer. Also I enjoy being active in my community and learning how to become a better leader."
- "It gave me an opportunity to increase my knowledge of leading. And gave me a more structured way of going about gaining that knowledge."
- "I was nominated for SL@M last year and now this program this year. I thought that this program would be an excellent way to become a better leader and have my ideas heard on campus."

Not to be overlooked by students was the chance the program provides to interact with and learn from various faculty members.

- "Dr. Champion nominated me to be a Leadership Fellow during my second semester here at Methodist. He explained what the program was about and that sparked a fire within me as I was awakened to the opportunity for self-development, exposure to avenues I would not normally be exposed to and also a chance to make a difference in the community I live in."
- "I have various opportunities such as conferences I can attend with the help of the program. I also have the opportunity to meet faculty and staff that can help me during my four years at Methodist."

7.2 As a Leadership Fellows Program participant, what have you learned about leadership?

Once again the respondents reflected a wide range of responses concerning the program, in general, and specifically what they learned. Perhaps the most important student statement was that "Anyone can be a leader. The leader is sometimes not the first one to do something, it is often both the first person and the first follower."

Some students indicated they learned about different leadership styles and techniques they could use in the leadership activities.

- "I have learned that there are many different ways to be a leader and it is important to have all those types of leaders."
- "Leadership comes in many different forms and some people respond better to some than others. Leadership is also a lifestyle."
- "I have attended many of the breakfasts for leaders on campus and just through those I feel I have learned many different leadership techniques. I also believe that I need to be more confident and outspoken because that is what gets you where you want to be in life."
- "I have learned about the different styles of leadership, and that anyone can become a leader if they are willing to make the commitment."
- "I have learned there are various types of leadership styles and a leader is the someone who has a vision that influences others to look and participate in their vision."
- "I have learned that there are many different ways to be an effective leader. Each person needs to find what they are best at and what they are worst at as a leader. They need to continue to use the skills that they are best at and also improve on what they are worst at in order to become the best possible leader they can be."

- "I have learned that there are many different types of leadership. I use a combination of all those different styles to help lead depending on what situation I am in."

Other respondents noted the important relationship between the leader and those being led. For example:

- "That being a leader does not necessarily mean that one individual does the work but the leader guides the others into the right direction."
- "I've learned that when working with others, everyone has to be a leader in the group so that the group can be successful. And also that a great leader always listens to what others have to say."
- "I have learned that leadership is not about leading others, but rather to be your best and to unlock the potential in others."
- "I have learned that leadership is a very valuable trait that can be nurtured, sharpened and implemented by being open-minded to ideas one acquires. I have also learned that leadership is a dynamic process; one needs to constantly adjust their mindset to cater to the needs of their followers."
- "I learned that being a leader is not about being a dictator but involving everyone in discussions. A leader can be afraid, but he or she rises above the fear to manage any problem or role. A leader is an example of what others should be like. A leader is humble, caring, compassionate, and will never make someone else do what he or she is not willing to do."

Goal setting, life-long learning, time management, organization, and leaving a legacy were among the items that students believe they have gained through their leadership journey. They noted:

- "I have learned a lot of important information regarding leadership from the various training sessions I have attended. Just to name a few are as follows: Know what I want to do in life and make certain time-specific goals to further myself in my life. Know what legacy I want to leave throughout certain times. Leadership skills; punctual, outgoing, listening, etc."
- "I have learned better how to stay organized. I have also learned that I really enjoy getting involved on campus."
- "That leadership can't be learned overnight. It is something that takes time to learn and refine as I go through different situations."

7.3 What do you like most about the Leadership Fellows Program?

As with any type of educational program, students will have "likes" and "dislikes." It is no different with the Methodist Leadership Journey program. Some typical "likes" identified by the survey respondents include how it provides various opportunities:

- "It allows you to use multiple different activities to meet the requirements for completion."
- "I like the different opportunities to become leaders and learn about leadership that are offered."
- "The wide variety of opportunities given to me to lead and serve."
- "The opportunities it provides are a wonderful way to branch out and meet people and start networking with people of authority."
- "It gives me many opportunities to learn how to be a leader. I get to meet and network with other leaders at Methodist University as well as in the community."
- "I like the opportunities to hear successful people describe the actions they took to get to where they currently are in life."

Other respondents "liked" the interaction. For example:

- "I am able to come together with other leaders and discuss topics and learn things from one another."
- "I like that we get involved on campus and we put out new ideas to the president for improvements so that he knows."
- "It allows you to meet new people and learn new things that we do not learn in the classroom."
- "Being able to gather together with fellow students that want to lead also and having the mentors and leaders of the program help with any questions or concerns we may have."

In addition, students appreciated the caring and openness of the leaders in various activities. For example:

- "Although I am new, everyone who is involved seems approachable and eager to help."
- "I like the fact the leaders of [Institution] are concerned with how us students see our school and what we would like to see around campus."

Finally, several respondents had positive things to say about the programming of the Leadership Fellows Program. For example:

- "I like how the group is informed about sessions we can attend via email. We don't have to look too hard to find programs to meet the criteria of the Leadership Fellows program."
- "I like how we are required to do several different tasks that will help us develop as leaders before we are allowed to wear the chords at graduation."
- "I enjoy the various workshops and training sessions because every speaker brings a different, unique aspect that another one doesn't have so learning from a variety of people is beneficial."
- "I like the flexibility of the program. It makes it easy to participate in other clubs as well. There are many opportunities to get all of the club requirements accomplished."

7.4 What do you like least about the Leadership Fellows Program?

With the "likes" come the inevitable "dislikes." For example:

- "I do not like that everything seems to be very serious and some more fun activities would be great."
- "The amount of meetings held. The times of the conferences and other things going on around campus."
- "I feel that we should get together more often so that we actually get to know each other better."
- "The requirements are a little confusing. They are explained well, but how to achieve them and what timeline they should be completed by is not explained well."
- "I'm a junior, and I don't think I have enough time to complete all of the requirements in time."
- "I hoped to do more community service while a part of this because being a leader is helping others and taking on tasks. I think by Leadership Fellows running different events it could make even better leaders, who have full respect for others and themselves, and people come out of the program."
- "A lot of the programs that we are asked to attend conflict with other programs that I am required to attend (as well as practice), therefore I am unable to attend as many events as I wish to."
- "I dislike that you have to be a President or Vice-President of a club in order to satisfy one of the requirements whilst other offices within certain clubs can be just as effective and involved depending on the club or organization."
- "Not being able to congregate all of the fellows together for most events."
- "I wish we did community service as Leadership Fellows."
- "No one really knows who we are. I think we need to join with other groups on campus and hold community service opportunities and/or events."
- "The timing conflicts with my schedule the more I begin to become involved on campus. The fact that I HAVE to complete a passport just to get credit just to be recognized that I was a member. And I have to take a class. I don't being a Bio major that doesn't work out to well for me."
- "There is no schedule for the meeting that would be good to attend and what is mandatory that is passed out at the beginning of the year. Also, not having a master list of everything that goes on outside of campus that counts towards that program."

7.5 How will what you have learned help you in your future leadership roles?

Common themes among the respondents included:

- "It will help me in becoming a more effective leader."
- "The things that I have learned will help me understand the strengths of leadership and help me be more understanding when working with a team. It has also taught me that the simplest ideas should be said because you never know how far it can go."
- "I will learn to deal with conflicts and different opinions, and how to motivate people to be the best they can be."
- "I will have the experience necessary to set me apart from many others as a leader of a group."

- "So far, the program has made me aware of how as a leader, I sometimes have to change my leadership style depending on the situation to make sure people do their part."
- "I will be able to adapt to different situations and different leadership styles."
- "What I have learned will help me to face my fears and do my responsibilities in life. It will also help me be more caring towards others and teach to lead when necessary."
- "Though LSS 3000, I have learned many different ways to more effectively communicate with others, and I know these will help me be a more effective leader for many years to come no matter what role I have."
- "What I have learned from the Leadership Fellows is to think about what is needed that will better the people as a whole then only what will help a few people."

Student respondents saw the immediate value of the program in terms of sports teams and other activities while at the university. For example:

- "I will use the skills I have acquired in almost every role I will take on. In classes, sports, other clubs, etc."
- "What I have learned from this program will benefit me greatly in my future endeavors. Specifically I know the leadership skill can help me become a project manager within my company. More short term I hope to become a captain of my lacrosse team because I know I can be a great leader of my teammates because of the skills I have learned from this program."

Respondents identified a clear link between their experiences in the program and their future endeavors. For example:

- "I have already started using my leadership skills I have learned by being a dance teacher of 3-6 year old children. Being able to pinpoint what is the best way to help them learn and lead them in doing the dance steps correctly. I am also going to be a Peer Mentor next year and an Orientation Leader."
- "I plan on joining the military as a MD and I feel like with the knowledge I will learn through this program will help me be a better doctor as well as an officer both in and out of the hospital."
- "As an entrepreneurship major I need to have great leadership skills to open my own business and create a good relationship between my business partners, employees and customers so that my business can grow."
- "As a future Certified Public Accountant, I need to be able to portray myself as a man of dignity, confidence and an affinity to teamwork. Being involved in the leadership fellows program at [Institution] allows me to come into myself and possess these qualities that distinguish me from other individuals. Future employers are looking for somebody who they see has potential to move up the ladder of authority; being a Leadership Fellow gives me the qualities necessary for this process."
- "I think I will apply a lot of the skills that I have learned to my work ethic, including when I become a leader in the workplace."
- "It will help me become a better leader with the organizations that I am involved with."
- "The Networks."

7.6 What leadership classes have you taken?

Table 2: Courses Completed by Students	
Class # - Title	Number of Students
LSS 3000 Principles of Leadership	7
LSS 3250 Theories & Techniques of Leadership	1
LSS 3400 Issues in Contemporary Leadership	1
LSS 3750 Future-Oriented Leadership	1
LSS 4700 Senior Internship	1

7.7 What extra-curricular activities have you held officer or other leadership positions in while a student at Methodist University?

Table 3: Campus Leadership Positions		
Organization-Group-Team	Position	Number of Student/s
SL@M (Student Leadership @ Methodist)	Not Given	4
Fraternity/Sorority	Vice President	2
	Alumnae Relations	1
	Greek Council Events	1
Work Study	Supervisor	2
Student Government	Not Given	2
Student Publications	Yearbook	1
	Newspaper	1
Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Society	Officer	2

Table 3: Campus Leadership Positions [Continued]		
Softball Team	Captain	1
Tally Leadership Ctn. Activities	Coordinator	1
Marching Band	Not Given	1
1 Voice Gospel Choir	Not Given	1
SAC (Student Activities Council)	HR Director	1
Methodist University United for Social Empowerment	Not Given	1
Methodist Rortaract	Not Given	1
National Student Leadership Society	Not Given	1
Criminal Justice Club	Not Given	1
Computer Club	Not Given	1

7.8 What off-campus leadership positions have you held?

Table 4: Off-Campus Activities	
Organization-Group-Team	Number of Student/s
Choreographic Institute of NC	2
Cumberland County Right for Life	1
Senior Patrol Leader (Boy Scouts)	1
Eagle Scout Project (Boy Scouts)	1
Work Shift Leader	1
Red Cross of America	1
Church Worship Leader	1
Church Youth Group Leader	1
Habitat for Humanity	1
Methodist University Community Engagement Project Leaders	1

8. Discussion – Conclusions – Implications

So, what have we learned? The following information provides an overview of what was learned about the current status of the Methodist University Leadership Journey development program. Additionally, several conclusions drawn from the survey will be presented. Finally, implications for future study will be provided.

8.1 Discussion

According to Wildland Fire Leadership Development Service (2013), effective programs are designed to influence people to achieve a result. They suggest that in order to accomplish such results, it is essential to consider critical elements such as (a) individual leaders, (b) the people working with the leader, (c) the situational factors like objectives, conditions, resources available, organizational influences, and other stakeholders, (d) short- and long-term consequences of decisions, and (e) changes in the environment. To that end, it will be imperative for Methodist University to conduct in-depth and ongoing assessment of the Leadership Journey Program. Given the broad-based nature of the Leadership Journey, the institution will need to use multiple assessment strategies. These assessments will need to be tailored to the various types of leadership elements that the institution has incorporated into its leadership development program.

For the Leadership Journey Program to thrive as it develops Leadership Fellows, then there will need to be cross-discipline and cross-divisional voluntary and harmonious efforts among faculty, staff, and administrators. They must create a clear vision and set goals for this leadership development program. It is important that they "begin with end in mind" (Covey, 1989).

Conflict is natural; it is inevitable; and, it is ongoing. Given how the leadership program crosses so many traditional organizational lines, it needs to be pointed out that "when you put any two people in a locked room for two minutes – you will have conflict." This is a truism applicable in any situation – even and including the operation of a student leadership development program such as the Methodist University Leadership Journey. So, there will be times when people have either real or perceived incompatible goals for this program.

Collaboration will be essential. Trusting others to deal with the situation fairly is important in order to effectively handle said conflict. As the leadership development program matures it is essential for those involved to apply Habit 5: Seek First to Understand; Then to be Understood (Covey, 1989). When you make the effort to understand the reasons for what someone has said or done then you are able to empathize with the individual. You reduce the potential for misunderstandings and the consequential hard feelings that result without your empathy and understanding. Such behavior can result in collaboration – "a willingness to move with rather than against the other – a willingness to explore and struggle precisely when you may not feel like it" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011, p. 173). The outcome of collaborating with others can help to ensure a better leadership development program without giving away your interests because you are able to integrate them with others to reach agreement and harmony.

8.2 Conclusions

Assessment should lead to improvements in the Leadership Journey Program. Students who are currently designated as Leadership Fellows have provided some helpful insights for improving the program. For example, leadership program directors should provide students with a clear, comprehensive schedule of approved events.

Another improvement would be to ensure more interaction time for all Leadership Fellows where they can get to know each other and develop a strong sense of unity. Along with this could come better campus networking and visibility of the program.

It is imperative that students begin the Journey as first year students or at least as first semester sophomores because of the rather extensive requirements that they must complete to earn the Fellows designation at graduation. The demands of college life on the students' time can make it difficult to satisfy requirements for attendance and participation in meetings, conferences, and service activities. And, some of these could be "fun" events.

In addition, it might be beneficial to broaden the categories of what is an accepted leader role (e.g., go beyond president and vice-president of a fraternity or sorority). This could encourage some students to take on officer position in other types of organizations, teams, and clubs.

Only seven students reported having taken a university leadership course, with one who completed several courses (see Table 2). From a faculty member point of view this seems to be a weakness in the current program. There appears to be a need to find a way to get students into the classroom.

At this point in the development of the Leadership Journey, administrators, faculty, and staff are making efforts to identify additional areas of collaboration on and off campus. For example, on campus networks are being formed with the Greek Life, Residential Life, and ROTC personnel. Off campus university personnel are reaching out to organizations such as Partnership for Children, Great Oak Youth Development Center, and Manna Church to help meet the needs of the community at large.

8.3 Implications

As the number of students in the Leadership Fellows Program continues to increase over the next several years, the university will need to continue to assess the leadership program: its curriculum, co-curricular activities, and off-campus involvements.

In closing, this is definitely a work in progress. In the coming years there will be opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them, to have successes, and to find more opportunities to provide students the chance to develop as effective leaders in the 21st century.

9. References

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