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# Student Leadership Development: A Focus on Experiential Leadership Orientation Within Higher Education

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STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON EXPERIENTIAL  
LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Logan Robert Denney

May 2013

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**Higher Education and Student Development  
Taylor University  
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Logan Robert Denney

entitled

Student Leadership Development: A Focus on Experiential Leadership  
Orientation within Higher Education

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree  
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### Abstract

Higher education is a fertile learning environment for student leaders. Theorists have asserted the worth of student leadership education as a core developmental component within the four-year undergraduate experience (Astin, 1993; Komives et al., 2011; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes and Posner, 2008; Roberts, 2007). This study utilized a pre-test, post-test design incorporating the *Student Leadership Practice Inventory (SLPI)* to assess a student life orientation program ( $N=38$ ) and to evaluate the change in student leadership skills due to the experiential orientation intervention at a small, private, Christian university on the west coast. Some components of the intervention included journaling quiet times (self), dramatic crisis role-play situations (group), and leadership skill teaching (community). Dependent t-tests of the research results revealed significant improvements in three leadership practices: Model the Way, Challenge the Process, and Enable Others to Act, while Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart did not change.

Based on the study's findings, a one-week experiential orientation can improve student leadership, particularly when using experiential components that focus on basic understanding, reflection, critical thinking, and experimentation in experiences that focus on self, group, and community. However, these experiential foci may be less modifiable, given the structure of some orientation programs. In the future, program designers should focus specifically on grounding programs in theory of experiential learning and

leadership theory. This will make programs theory based, well thought, and intentional, aiding student leaders in their leadership development.

## Acknowledgements

The world is changing, in which a college education is becoming more and more critical for success. The development of one's mind is an important thing, in fact, it is a beautiful thing; however, this cannot be the only mission of higher education. Developing the whole-person: mind, body, spirit, and soul is critical in order to serve a world in need.

Leadership is one developmental experience that never ceases as long as one strives to learn, grow, develop, and change. As many understand, the problems of today (poverty, famine, hunger, war, illiteracy, sickness, slavery, murder, abuse, theft, neglect, and many more) are weighed, measured, and negotiated by our civic and national leaders. These men and women possess a high calling and may point to one that started in jr. high school, high school, college, or graduate school, which inspired them to lead change. As educators of future world changers, we must remember the worth, the value, and the effect our jobs may have on any student with whom we interact. For we never know when the next Martin Luther King Jr., Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, C. S. Lewis, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, or Mahatma Gandhi will be sitting right in front of us. May we never take lightly the call to shape, develop, and empower students, as it is truly a grace of great things.

Like the many prominent leaders mentioned here, and those not mentioned, I too have had several encounters with individuals who have sharpened, tested, molded,

developed, and believed in me. Without these people, I would not be where I am today, and so I give thanks for their mark and effect on my life.

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*Simpson University.* All graduate students must start somewhere. Simpson University, you will always be close to my heart as the turning point in my call to follow



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I most of all want to thank my Lord, Jesus Christ, for his never-ending love for me and his sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Lord, you have shaped me and you know me. Thank you for your providence through these years. “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple” (Psalm 27:4, NASB).

*In Loving Memory*

*of*

*Rebecca Ann Denney*

*July 29, 1956 - January 24, 2013*

*I will always cherish the years God gave you to love me, shape me, and encourage me.*

*Your example has inspired me to change the world. Paint the skies, Mom.*

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Tables .....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Student Leadership.....	1
Experiential Learning.....	2
Experiential Student Leadership Orientation.....	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	5
History of Student Leadership .....	6
Student Leadership: Themes of Development.....	7
Student Leadership: Developmental Processes .....	13
Student Leadership: An Experiential Process of Learning.....	18
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	22
Participants.....	22
Instrumentation .....	22
Procedures.....	24
Data Analysis .....	26
Chapter 4: Results .....	27
Model the Way.....	28

Challenge the Process .....	28
Enable Others to Act.....	28
Inspire a Shared Vision.....	29
Encourage the Heart.....	29
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	30
Leadership Practices .....	30
Implications.....	35
Limitations .....	37
Conclusion .....	38
References.....	40
Appendix: Orientation Layout .....	46

## List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Sample (N=38) .....	27
Table 2. SLPI Scoring.....	29

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The growth and continued development of student leadership programs and positions within higher education have become vital components of the college experience. In order to foster this development, higher education professionals must understand student leadership development processes. One such developmental process is the orientation period when newly-hired student leaders are brought to campus, acquainted with the professional staff, immersed in leadership skill activities, and empowered to lead a campus of peers. This experience, in many ways, is the formational core for a student's leadership practice, which Komives et al. (2011), Kouzes and Posner (2008), and Roberts (2007) asserted as deeper learning experience extending beyond the formal classroom. Examples of deeper learning experiences include problem solving initiatives, team building experiences, service learning opportunities, off-campus trips, outdoor adventure education, and experiential orientations. Therefore, this study focused on student leadership development within an experiential orientation, specifically regarding the effects on a student leaders' post-orientation development.

### **Student Leadership**

Since the beginning of higher education, the purpose of the academy has been the development of the student through critical learning within the classroom setting. In the realms of leadership development, "higher education is a vital and fertile holding

environment for leadership learning among adults” (Roberts, 2007, p. 1). The academy, traditionally seen as a place for professional and academic growth, has evolved from classroom-only instruction into a holistic, well-rounded experience that encompasses student ambition within the extracurricular realm (Astin, 1993; Roberts, 2007; Thelin, 2004). This holistic experience has broadened to the creation of student leadership programs within the university that are meant to teach and develop core traits and skills such as identity development, personal and professional skills, teamwork and collaboration, self-introspection, civic responsibility, interpersonal and intrapersonal development, meaningful service, and appreciation for diversity (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Posner, 2009). These programs have been called “principle-centered leadership programs” because they aid in the development of student leaders who choose courses of action that affect not only their lives, but the lives of others. Student leaders are individuals who understand themselves, see potential, strive to learn, model the example, inspire others, choose to improve, take risks, and enlist support for common causes (Burns, 2006; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Roberts, 2007).

### **Experiential Learning**

The process of student understanding and development can be tied to the theory of experiential learning developed by David Kolb in 1984. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) described Kolb’s theory as an enhancement that enables teachers and educators to challenge and support students in their developmental process. Dewey (1923) stated, “learning starts with problems rooted in experiences” (p. 226). Roberts (2007) described the experiential learning process of leaders “as a necessary condition to

foster deeper leadership” (p. 17). These perspectives highlight the worth of Kolb’s theory (1984), which involves student learning and development pertaining to the atmosphere and activity with which a student interacts and engages. Kolb (1984) noted that within an atmosphere or environment of learning, the student will interact on four different phases: concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualization (thinking), and active experimentation (doing). In terms of outcomes, the learner will process through each individual phase—feeling, watching, thinking, and doing—in order to create newer concrete experiences (Owens, 2011). Overall, Kolb’s theory (1984) is an excellent tool within higher education, especially within student development education due to the theory’s focus on deeper learning (Roberts, 2007).

### **Experiential Student Leadership Orientation**

Higher education and student leadership programs are beginning to introduce and apply the concept of experiential learning within the extracurricular realm; however, much is still unexplored or underused due to lack of best practice knowledge in colleges and universities. Higher education professionals must see the need for informed practice in student leadership programs that involve deeper understanding of program purpose, leadership pedagogy, and student development needs. Theorists have focused on the process of development for many years initiating the research and creation of many models of student leadership: Burns (2006); Greenleaf & Spears (2002); Komives et al. (2005); Kouzes and Posner (2008); Outcalt, Faris, and McMahon (2001); Reiland (2011); and Rost (1993). Despite the numerous theories, a gap exists in the literature between proper orientation of student leaders and their learning process.



Proper training of student leaders requires an intentional focus on curriculum development, student experience, learning environment, experiential tasks, and informative trainings of student leaders, which are best practices regarding student leadership orientation in higher education. The key to understanding a student leader's development lies within the learning process of his or her orientation experience. From this point of view, Kolb's theory of experiential learning is a useful addition to student leadership training as the "experience of the student" is guided by a well-created, theory-backed, intentionally structured leadership orientation experience.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to understand the impact of student leadership orientation through the structure of experiential process to develop student leaders. The following research question was developed to guide the study throughout the research process:

- Do student leaders significantly increase their leadership practice through an organized, structured orientation experience?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Higher education is a crucial period for leadership learning and development as students interact daily in an environment which constantly challenges them to engage, participate, learn, and eventually make a conscious decision to lead (Astin, 1993; Roberts, 2007). The perspective of many colleges and universities is to nurture and develop student leaders into individuals who will impact the world for the common good (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Roberts, 2007; Sanders, 1980). Komives and Wagner (2009) noted, “Leadership is responsibly choosing courses of action toward a desirable future” (p. 5). As leadership development continually becomes a core-learning component of the undergraduate education, institutional administration and faculty must understand what student leadership is, learn how leadership is developed in students, and consider all methods to enhance the growth of student leaders.

This chapter focuses on higher education and leadership development professional literature in order to understand four key concepts of student leadership. These areas are: the history of student leadership programs, the core themes of student leadership development, the developmental processes that induce student leadership, and the use of experiential process in student leadership orientation.

## **History of Student Leadership**

The establishment of student leadership programs and student perspective has not always been a core objective in higher education, especially before the rise of the “extracurriculum” in the 1820s (Ringenberg, 2006; Rudolph, 1990). Initially, many colleges were designed to create leaders through classroom instruction. As Thelin (2004) described, “the colonial college was an insurance policy guaranteeing that these favored young men would acquire not only literacy, but a sense of leadership and service” (p. 26). A perspective to grow the next gentlemen politicians was the core influence of many higher education institutions; however, the focus was on classroom studies, which was reinforced by instructors. Rarely was there leadership instruction outside the classroom with the exception of the dormitory where students lived in close proximity with peers and were forced to confront diverse values (Rudolph, 1990).

A century later, the rise of student development and leadership programs began with new developments to educational philosophy, specifically, Dewey in 1923. Dewey (1923) advocated for “democratic and engaged learning” within higher education setting the stage for student development theory (Garrett, McVicar, Haynes, & Shehane, 2010; Roberts, 2007). The next 20 years included pivotal developments in higher education as the idea of “holistic” student development and deeper learning outside the classroom sparked a new wave of student affairs (Roberts). By the end of World War II and the coming of the Baby Boomer generation, the student development profession was gaining momentum bolstered by the establishment of admissions, orientation, counseling, housing, recreation, financial aid, and career development units within Student Services (Garrett, McVicar, Haynes, & Shehane, 2010; Roberts, 2007).

With the growth of the student development profession, the idea of “student change agents” surfaced in the late 1960s, which sparked the emergence of leadership programs in the 1970s (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). The 1970s catalyzed student development as several factors inspired the idea of “student voice” and the increase of student leadership organizations, many of which were created in response to civil rights, women’s rights, and the Vietnam War (Roberts, 2007; Thelin, 2004). In the mid-1970s and early-1980s, leadership conferences, courses, and research led to the emergence of core areas of knowledge, understanding, investigation, and growth for student affairs professionals and students (Roberts, 2007). As the knowledge of student development personnel and scholars continued to mature, models and theories of student leadership became common among universities where student leadership organizations (student governments, residence hall associations, multi-cultural clubs, and social action committees) were created based on the core models of leadership and identity development (Komives et al., 2007).

### **Student Leadership: Themes of Development**

The emergence of student leadership programs in higher education is a recent and surging development in the last 40 to 50 years. Currently, student leadership is a core developmental outcome of many universities’ curriculum and college experience (Komives et al., 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Logue et al., 2005; Roberts, 2007). With this perspective, administrators, faculty, staff, and students must understand and begin to foster the core themes of leadership within student leadership programs. These themes—broadly used and applied—will lead to a greater understanding of development of student leadership for those who engage in the study of leadership development. From a review

of leadership literature, three core themes of student leadership are presented below in order to understand the learning outcome of student leadership. These themes are awareness of self and behavior, modeling the example to inspire change, and collaborative movement.

**Awareness of self and behavior.** One of the foundational steps to leadership in any organization, team, or system is an individual's awareness of self and behavior. Awareness of self and behavior may appear to be easily fostered and understood; however, students need to develop a keen awareness of who they are emotionally, physically, mentally, and even spiritually to develop as leaders (Gehrke, 2008; Wisner, 2011). Astin (1993) noted that the college experience is a positive developmental environment for students to begin to learn more about themselves, especially as leaders. Theorists Chickering (1969), Erikson (1980), and Marcia (1984) described college as a core experience within the identity development of a young adult, and Kolb (1984) added, "to fully appreciate a person's approach to learning, we need to understand his or her position on another dimensions," such as identity development in college (p. 98).

Student leadership is an influential, self-introspective process that leads to student leaders having clear and consistent values (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Priest & Gass, 2005; Roberts, 2007). This is first catalyzed when student leaders choose to pursue the process of reflective practice in order to find meaning (Roberts, 2007). Komives and Wagner (2009) defined this practice of understanding self as developing values, identifying beliefs, and discovering talents. Kouzes and Posner (2008) noted that the exploration of self is crucial in leading student leaders to establish a firm foundation of values, the foundation they will eventually use when they lead others.

As student leaders begin to develop a sense of self from reflective practice, they begin establish a lifestyle of positive behavior. In their research on student leadership best practices, Kouzes and Posner (2008) noted that leadership is less about personality and more about behavior: “Titles are granted but it’s your behavior that wins you respect” (p. 10). The way a student conducts his or her values is the way he or she will achieve leadership development. In his research on transformational leadership, Burns (1978, 2006) noted that leadership is measured by ethical and moral values which guide leadership practice. The pursuit of ethical and moral values in leadership is personal conviction, which is guided by a student’s behavior. Roberts (2007) defined conviction as “the ability to overcome doubt and to be convinced that what I believe is achievable” (p. 97). This statement is important as a student leader’s conviction will lead to an authentic, believable, and trustworthy lifestyle which others will follow.

A final component to awareness of self and behavior is the idea that leaders are learners. Roberts (2007) described how leadership can be taught and cultivated if there is a desire to learn within the individual. In addition to learning, Kouzes and Posner (2008) suggested that leaders learn through “little victories or steps” of understanding in which they build confidence from experiences they encounter due to a desire to self-improve.

**Modeling the example to inspire change.** With a solid foundation of self-awareness, student leaders are a passionate force, as they believe not only themselves, but hold a true conviction to produce change by “responsibly choosing courses of action toward a desirable future” (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. 5). Roberts (2007) noted that student leadership is a conviction to action in which students become catalysts for change (pp. 3 & 97). This requires a commitment to a critical component for leaders to act—risk

taking. Risk taking is a search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. Kouzes & Posner (2008) stated that “student leaders take risks, and so challenge the process in order to understand it” (p. 22).

A student leader’s conviction to action is a core component not only to developing as a leader, but also gaining the respect of others (Loeb, 1999). Kouzes and Posner (2008) noted that leadership is modeling the way by setting the example, taking risks, and engaging in meaningful service, experiences, and involvement. Through student leaders’ desire to model the way of change, they earn the right and respect to lead because of direct involvement and action. Komives and Wagner (2009) noted this modeling example as a “participation in interest beyond oneself” in order to engage the greater community (p. 57). Many would identify this leadership attribute as citizenship or the active engagement of service to others (civic duty is a key learning component of colleges and universities).

Through student leaders’ conviction to modeling citizenship, they inspire a shared vision and establish peer influence, leading to the encouragement of collaboration (Haber, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Along with this relationship, Komives et al. (2005) noted that peers serve as a source of affirmation and support for student leadership development, establishing a mutual relationship between leader and follower. Martin (2001) also added that peer influence is an integral part student leadership development leading to a stronger unification of all those who take part. With mutual relationship of collaboration established between leader and follower, a spirit of community is established in which leaders empower others by setting a vision and others become inspired to act on their agency (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

**Collaborative movement.** As students choose to understand their personal values and ethics, model those values, and inspire others to action, a community of collaboration and unity forms. Leadership is a non-hierarchical, dynamic, collaborative effort with a shared vision or goal (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Martin, 2001; Roberts, 2007; Sanders, 1980). This collaboration is an organic effort, developing from three key points: a common purpose, shared responsibility in reaching the goal, and interdependency of the leaders and followers.

As outlined above, student leadership is purposeful, dynamic collaboration with a common purpose. Roberts (2007) explained that leadership means to labor together by joining in a mutual endeavor and common purpose. This is a process, however, in which student leaders will move from a leader-centric point of view to a leadership collaborative (Komives et al., 2005). Kouzes & Posner (2008) stated, “relate before you initiate: you must get to know those whom you enlist support” (p. 13). By moving from a hierarchal approach to one of collaboration, student leaders foster bonds with others in which they establish trust and relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). As individual talents are used for group purposes, a sense of shared responsibility takes form, leading to a greater sense of community.

As trust and positive interactions form between the student leader and the group, a sense of a shared responsibility or group buy-in is established. Within this state of shared responsibility, student leaders delegate and enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Roberts (2007) noted that shared leadership maintains sustainability of purpose, stating, “When organizations foster shared leadership they allow others to learn and lead,



guaranteeing that the organization would have an opportunity at sustainability after the leader leaves—a new leader rises from within” (p. 99).

Establishment of relationship and collaboration leads to collective action and positive change in which students focus less on self and move toward what is best for the group and community (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Logue et al., 2005). Hall (2008) agreed that student leadership brings mutual respect for others in which leaders learn how to work with one another through challenging situations. Student leadership goes beyond individuals meeting personal expectations; a true student leader enables others to act toward goal accomplishment, establishing a spirit of collaborative movement (Sanders, 1980).

The final key to non-hierarchical collaborative effort is that leaders and followers are interdependent. Roberts (2007) noted the outcomes of this relationship as “leaders depend on acquiescence and followers seek hope and purpose” (p. 21). The positions are mutually beneficial, leading to a relationship that is transformative for the leader and the follower (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008). This relationship is a core component of the spirit of collaboration, as leaders strive not to dictate, but to initiate others to action (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

The three themes of leadership (awareness of self and behavior, modeling the example to foster change, non-hierarchical collaborative effort) represent the work of several major theorists in the field of student leadership. From these works, higher education administrators and professionals may see the developmental process of a student leader as well as the value of student leadership programs on campus.

## **Student Leadership: Developmental Processes**

One way many program administrators attempt to gain best practice knowledge of developmental processes is to focus on the core theories and frameworks of student leaders. In his book, *Deeper Learning in Leadership*, Roberts (2007) highlighted several key elements that compose leadership programs including program framework and design, populations involved and developmental influences, standards for leadership programs, and successful elements of leadership programs. These elements are necessary in order understand the importance of strong, well-developed leadership program, as well as how these programs affect student leadership development.

**Program framework and design.** As university leaders desire to build quality student leadership programs, they must understand the basic elements of leadership development within their program (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). Roberts (2007) identified three core frames of leadership program design that induce leadership growth: training activities, educational activities, and leadership development processes. Within these three frames, leaders not only learn about leadership, but they also learn more about themselves.

Roberts (2007) defined training activities as activities that include learning experiences concretely, allowing student leaders to “translate newly acquired insight or skill into an immediate real situation” (p. 131). Within this frame, student leaders engage knowledge through a variety of learning experiences including courses, workshops, retreats, online modules, leadership transcripts, institutes, internships, service-learning, community-based research, and study abroad. These experiences lead to a core development that Komives et al. (2005) described as meaningful involvement.

Meaningful involvement is a training ground where leadership identity begins to form as student leaders clarify personal values, understand the diversity of their peers, and engage the opportunity to learn about self and develop skills (Komives et al., 2005).

The second element of leadership program design is educational curriculum. Leadership modules provide “generalizable theories, principles, and approaches” that are applicable and relevant to student leader development (Roberts, 2007, p. 132). Educational curriculum is usually tied to program learning outcomes and is a part of courses, classes, and seminars in which student leaders engage the best practices of student leadership. This is the “in-class” method that has made up leadership development for the last two centuries (Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2004).

Finally, the leadership development process allows participants to develop maturity and knowledge from the individual’s specific experience (Roberts, 2007). The experiential process of development is a combination of the first two frames (training and educational curriculum) as leadership is a maturation process over a longitudinal period; the longer the period of development process, the stronger the student leader’s development (Fink, 2003; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Roberts; 2007). Dewey (1938) referred to this process as “experience building on experience” (p. 44). Core influential elements of experience that foster development are the individuals who advise development (teachers/mentors), the material the leaders encounter (books/manuals), and the experiences that shape the student leader’s development (trainings/periods of time) (Komives et al., 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Roberts, 2007).

**Multiple populations and developmental influences.** Many organizations have claimed that it is not the structure or products that make an organization, but rather the

people and the populations who move the organization (Collins, 2001). Bolman and Deal (2003) referred to this practice as a focus on the “human resource frame” of the organization, essentially, a desire to develop or serve people over structural needs. In several leadership programs across the country, a best practice approach involves addressing or including multiple populations as this ensures that “all [participants] recognize their potential to explore and advance their leadership understanding” (Roberts, 2007, p. 135). A call to diversity within a leadership program is an indispensable element of the student leadership development as students interact with values and diverse points of view that stretch, challenge, and even alter their perspectives. Komives et al. (2005) called this peer influence in which student leaders become models that serve as “a source of affirmation and support for peers” (p. 597). Through the affirmation process, students become meaning-makers for one another (sources for understanding) leading to new heights of leadership development.

**Standards for student leadership programs.** Along with framework, design, and participants within a leadership program, a final element involves standards for the program. Standards are vital not only to program development, but to program growth as they give administrators goals and guidelines to follow in order to promote best practices within the program (Roberts, 2007). The Council for Advancement Standards (CAS) for Student Leadership Programs developed standards in 1996 which focused on program management and sustainability based on the following items: institutional mission, leadership, organization and management, human resources, financial resources, facilities, technologies, equipment, legal responsibilities, equal opportunity, access, affirmative action, campus and community relations, diversity, ethics, assessment, and

evaluation (Council, 2012; Roberts, 2007). From these standards, programs find an outline for assessing program growth and development needs. Assessment of student leadership programs is a needed tool within higher education in order for programs to be successful and sustainable.

**Success in leadership programs.** From the first three elements of leadership program, many college educators are able to assess and understand how to develop their student leaders by developing a successful student leadership program. Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999) focused on the topic of success in leadership programs as they proposed four strategies that would improve the likelihood of success. These four success factors include context, philosophy, sustainability, and common practices.

Student leadership context is focused on program purpose and program fit within the university, specifically, program alignment with university mission, ideals, and structure (Birnbaum, 1988; Zimmer-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Roberts (2007) noted that leadership programs positioned on the mission of the institution are likely to be within context. Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999) referred to this positioning as having broad institutional support in terms of the curricular, extracurricular, and co-curricular programs.

The second factor of success is a program's philosophy or common intellectual framework that is foundational within program practices (Roberts, 2007). The importance of having a framework focused on the development of the intellect reinforces that leadership can be developed, as noted by Kolb & Kolb (2005), Kouzes and Posner (2008), Richlin (2006), and Roberts (2007). Designing leadership for learning requires that explicit frameworks of knowledge exist, which give depth to teaching goals and

learning outcomes for both the teacher and the student (Richlin, 2006). For professionals, this is known as being “abreast” in the best practice literature and also using these practices, theories, and concepts to examine a program’s core values to ensure they are appropriate for students (Richlin, 2006; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). From these frameworks of knowledge, the program can develop a working definition of leadership and also have a comprehensive approach in coordinating learning and experiential activities (Roberts, 2007).

Following the establishment of program philosophy and a working framework, higher education professionals must establish sustainable practices that enlist the continual growth of their programs. Boatman (1999), Cress (2001), and Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999) noted sustainable practices as broad involvement of faculty and administration, and in depth assessment and evaluation that focus on learning outcomes, objectives, satisfaction, participation and progress metrics.

Finally, professionals need to establish common practices within their student leadership program. These practices should be modeled to fit the institution’s mission as noted in program context; however, they should not be so narrow that program limitations develop. The following are common practices noted by Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (2009): skill building, reflection, self-assessment, problem solving, intercultural awareness, service learning, servant leadership, community involvement, public policy, and outdoor activities.

Overall, student leadership programs are a worthy student development practice within higher education; however, without attention to program design and creation, educators will create programs based on opinion rather than theory. Birnbaum (1988)

noted this problem within higher education as a “bean bag” curriculum, as interests, opinions, and agendas tend to fill student learning time rather than learning outcomes and explicit knowledge frameworks. In order to avoid this limitation, educators must also focus on the process of planning and then facilitating learning within their leadership program models.

### **Student Leadership: An Experiential Process of Learning**

“Leadership is inherently an experiential process of engaging with others and learning how to be more effective in that context” (Owen, 2011, p. 118). The process of leadership is a highly-complex developmental learning experience for students within higher education. Students who participate in leadership development are consistently engaging the experiential processes of learning, a process that is transformative and continuous (Kolb, 1984; Komives & Wagner 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Owens, 2011; Roberts, 2007).

David Kolb (1984) created a learning style theory “based on philosophical and epistemological theories from behaviorists of learning and idealist educational approaches” (p. 25). In his writings, Kolb described learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Kolb focused on transformative experiences that are processes of adaptation and learning rather than content and outcomes. Experiential learning is characterized as a “continuous process grounded in experience” in which knowledge is “continuously derived and modified” by the experiences of the learner (p. 27). The roots of experiential learning draw back to the educational theorist Dewey (1938) who stated, “What the student has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and

dealing effectively with the situations which follow” (p. 44). The core concept of experiential learning is that “continuity of experience is a powerful truth of human existence” and is central to student learning as students base their understanding from problems rooted in experience (Dewey, 1938, p. 35).

Kolb (1984) created the *Theory of Experiential Learning* based on the student’s nature to process and perceive. These two actions contain two primary modes each: perceiving information inhibits abstract conceptualization and concrete experience; processing information occurs through reflective observation or active experimentation (Owens, 2011). With these two actions covering four core phases, Kolb described learning as four-step cycle: concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualization (thinking), and active experimentation (doing) (Kolb, 1984; Martin, 2006). From these four phases, learners cycle through each phase in order to establish more concrete experience, essentially leading the learner to understand new aspects about what it is they are experiencing.

In terms of leadership development, Kolb’s (1984) theory is highly influential as students are in a continuous transformative development. Within this process, students have different learning needs which must be targeted by leadership programs in order to foster successful learning (Owens, 2011). Kolb’s four phases are useful sources for developing leadership activities, specifically leadership trainings and orientations for higher education institutions. In *The Handbook for Leadership Development*, Komives et al. (2011) advocated a model that involves the Kolb’s (1984) four types when developing leadership programs. The model is shown in a matrix created from Kolb and Rainey (1995), which is designed with each experiential learning phase and five core themes that



each Kolb type meets: purpose of education, structure of learning environment, nature of feedback, role of educator, and activities. This matrix is a useful tool for educators; especially those who wish to inform and structure a leadership program with strong learning theory.

Overall, the experiential learning process is an advancement to higher education practice that must be used more often in leadership development due to the theory's diversity in learning styles. With the growth of student leadership programs, Kolb's (1984) theory is a foundational start for best, informed practices, in which student development educators can better understand leadership development and the process by which leadership should be taught to students. Student leadership programs must be deliberate in pedagogy, grounded in theory, have standards and structure, and be informed by professionals who understand best practices. In order to assist in developing student leaders, educators must understand the gap between experiential learning and leadership experience as the focus on bridging this void will lead to better student development programs in higher education for student leaders.

In conclusion, student leadership development is a core developmental component within the four-year undergraduate experience. Student leaders are developed not only by classroom knowledge, but also learning experiences within the extracurricular environment, such as leadership program orientations. These experiences foster key developmental benefits such as identity development, professional skills, collaboration, self-introspection, civic responsibility, interpersonal development, meaningful service, and appreciation for diversity. As a core learning experience, student leadership development incorporates experiential learning, a process which involves four phases—

basic understanding, watching, thinking and then doing—in order to develop and create further leadership understanding. The process by which leaders begin to understand their potential is a core-learning developmental experience, one that must be theory-based, standard-backed, professionally organized, and intentionally focused. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to understand the effectiveness of a student leadership orientation/training that used methods of experiential learning to develop student leaders. Through this investigation, the phenomenon of a leadership training/orientation was studied in order to understand the possible growth of student leadership development through experiential orientation and training. The hypothesis for this study was *student leaders will increase their leadership practice after an organized experiential orientation.*

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Participants

Participants included volunteers from a student life leadership orientation program at a small, private, Christian, liberal arts university on the West Coast of the United States with student body of more than 1,000. The student-leaders in this study ( $N=44$ ) were traditional undergraduates who had been hired in the previous academic year based on leadership potential, program fit, and willingness to be involved on campus as peer leaders. Upon completion of the study, 38 students responded and completed the testing process: 14 were male and 24 female between the ages 18 and 25 years of age.

Three groups of student leader positions were represented within the sample, which represented residence life or commuter life within the student life program at the university. The breakdown of student leader positions included resident assistants (28), commuter assistants (4), and student directors (6). Participants varied in classification from sophomore to senior.

#### Instrumentation

**Student Leadership Practices Inventory.** The quantitative survey used for leadership study was the *Student Leadership Practices Inventory (SLPI)* by Kouzes and Posner (2006) with permission from Jossey-Bass. The SLPI is based on Kouzes' and Posner's *Student Leadership Challenge* (2008), which identifies five key behaviors or

practices of student leadership. The SLPI is a 30-statement survey that addresses essential behaviors that a student leader may embody when they are executing his or her personal best leadership practice (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Within these statements, participants responded using a five-point Likert scale with one being “rarely or seldom,” and five being “very frequently” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 1). Through the SLPI, respondents indicated the frequency of which a particular leadership behavior was a part of their personal practice. Kouzes and Posner (2006) created the 30-statement inventory to assess the five leadership practices (Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, Encourage the Heart), which are individually outlined through six different statements, respectively, within the SLPI. The results of the SLPI yielded a leadership practice score for each of the five different behaviors (See the Appendix for an SLPI sample). Validity and reliability evidences for the SLPI exist in various college populations including “fraternities, residence halls, orientation programs, academic majors, and athletic teams” (Posner, 2004, p. 450). The SLPI has an internal reliability of .66, a test-retest reliability above  $r=.51$  over a 10-week period as noted by Pugh (2000), and is “relatively independent of various demographic variables: gender, age, ethnicity” (Posner, 2004, p. 450).

**SLPI practices defined.** The SLPI inventory assesses the five practices for exemplary student leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Model the Way focuses on students’ ability to clarify personal values, beliefs, and convictions and model an example of positive change. Inspire a Shared Vision involves students’ ability to embrace a shared vision and enlist others in the action of change. Challenge the Process involves students’ enthusiasm to take risks, critically think, and act on difficult issues. Enable Others to Act

measures students' ability to delegate, empower, and collaborate with others toward a common goal. Encourage the Heart examines how students celebrate and encourage other's contributions along with the aligning of values and victories from a collaborative effort.

### **Procedures**

The research design was a pre-test, post-test design. The quantitative procedure involved first issuing the SLPI pre-test before orientation in order to observe and effectively measure baseline leadership behavior. The student life orientation program served as an intervention within this study. Finally, the SLPI post-test was issued after orientation in order to measure the change in leadership behavior after intervention.

Below is a detailed description the study.

From the hypothesis, an experiential student leadership program was selected that specifically focused on learning outcomes, standards, and the experiential process of student leaders. The program occurred over a week-long orientation schedule, in which students were trained in three atmospheres: community of leaders, small group teams, and individually. Students interacted with leadership training pedagogy through understanding, observing, conceptualizing, and experimenting in each unique experience, task, teaching, and initiative. Reflecting on the program design of leadership trainings, student leaders engaged knowledge through a variety of learning experiences including introspective reflective times, team building initiatives, and community group trainings. These experiences lead to a core development that Komives et al. (2005) described as meaningful involvement. The student life program studied in this research used a

uniqueness of experiences that fostered a transformative development process—one that facilitated leadership development for all students.

The student life orientation program incorporated two units of campus life: residence life and commuter life. The student assistants and student directors arrived to campus two weeks before the beginning of the fall semester. Upon arrival, the student leaders moved in, reacquainted themselves with staff and peers, and then were briefed on the upcoming training program. Before the administration of the SLPI, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form that released the researcher to use, process, and retain the information and data for research. Upon consent, the SLPI was issued to participants before the leadership orientation as a pre-test. The intervention—student life orientation program—was an experiential training program that involved engagement in leadership skill development, position related expectations and trainings, interpersonal/group dynamics, and intrapersonal/self-reflection (See Appendix for Orientation Layout). The training program was conducted on and off campus in which student leaders interacted in experiential learning environments that potentially fostered self-understanding, interpersonal team dynamics, and leadership practice and behavior through critical learning experiences, establishing deeper learning and understanding. After completion, the SLPI post-test was issued to participants. All questionnaires and consent forms were collected by the student life professional staff, packaged for confidentiality, and sent to the researcher for data analysis. The results of the SLPI were determined by manual scoring as explained in Kouzes and Posner's (2005) *Student Leadership Challenge Facilitators Guide*.

## **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the sample including sex and leadership classification. The SLPI pre- and post-test results were compared using a dependent *t*-test to assess the change in leadership practice behavior pre-intervention to post-intervention. An *a priori* alpha level of .05 was set. A moderate effect size analysis was set at 0.5. All data was recorded electronically and scored in SPSS statistics.

## Chapter 4

### Results

A total of 44 people were asked to volunteer in this study. Of that total, 38 students volunteered to participate: six students were dropped from the study (two chose not participate, three did not complete the post-test, and one did not complete the pre-test). Of the three student leader positions represented within this sample, 28 were resident assistants, four were commuter assistants, and six were student directors. Among the 38 participants that completed the study, 14 students were male and 24 were female, all between the ages of 18 and 25 years old. Participants varied in classification from sophomore to senior. Table 1 contains a summary of descriptive statistics collected for the study including sex and leadership position.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for the Sample (N = 38)*

Variables	Total	Male	Female
Sex			
Male	14	---	---
Female	24	---	---
Leadership Positions			
Resident Asst.	28	10	18
Commuter Asst.	4	2	2
Student Directors	6	2	4



A dependent *t*-test was used to compare the differences between the SLPI pre-test results and post-test results. Of the five practices of leadership contained in the SLPI questionnaire, the results were statistically significant on three practices: Model the Way, Challenge the Process, and Enable Others to Act.

### **Model the Way**

On average, after intervention, the leadership practice of Model the Way increased significantly from pre-test scores ( $M = 22.26$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ) to post-test scores ( $M = 23.55$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ),  $t(37) = -2.57$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $d = .39$ .

### **Challenge the Process**

On average, after intervention, the leadership practice of Challenge the Process increased significantly from pre-test scores ( $M = 20.78$ ,  $SD = 3.37$ ) to post-test scores ( $M = 22.5$ ,  $SD = 2.97$ ),  $t(37) = -3.381$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .48$ .

### **Enable Others to Act**

On average, after intervention, the leadership practice of Enable Others to Act increased significantly from pre-test scores ( $M = 24.78$ ,  $SD = 2.53$ ) to post-test scores ( $M = 25.78$ ,  $SD = 2.42$ ),  $t(37) = -2.720$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $d = .41$ .

The remaining two leadership practices, Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart were outside the levels of significance for the dependent *t*-test; however, the test scores held a high probability difference being just above the *p* value of .05. The following is the dependent *t*-test statistics and dependent *t*-test report for these two leadership practices.

### Inspire a Shared Vision

On average, after intervention, the leadership practice of Inspire a Shared Vision increased from pre-test scores ( $M = 22.15$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ) to post-test scores ( $M = 23.26$ ,  $SD = 3.09$ ),  $t(37) = -1.854$ ,  $p = .072$ ,  $d = .29$ .

### Encourage the Heart

On average, after intervention, the leadership practice of Encourage the Heart increased from pre-test scores ( $M = 22.84$ ,  $SD = 3.51$ ) to post-test scores ( $M = 23.81$ ,  $SD = 3.51$ ),  $t(37) = -1.723$ ,  $p = .093$ ,  $d = .27$ .

Table 2 contains the summary of all SLPI dependent  $t$ -test scores including  $t$  values, degrees of freedom, significance, effect size, means, and, standard deviation.

Table 2

#### *SLPI Scoring*

Variables	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Dependent $t$ -test	
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$p$ values	$d$ values
Model the Way	22.26	2.76	23.55	2.70	.014	.39
Inspire a Shared Vision	22.15	2.72	23.26	3.09	.072	.29
Challenge the Process	20.78	3.37	23.55	2.97	.002	.48
Enable Other to Act	24.78	2.53	25.78	2.42	.010	.41
Encourage the Heart	22.84	3.51	23.81	3.51	.093	.27

*Note.* Degrees of freedom for all var.  $df = 37$ . Significance =  $p < .05$ . Effect Size  $d > .5$

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The training of student leaders is a vital learning component within the higher education experience (Fink, 2003; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Komives et al., 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Priest & Gass, 2005; Roberts, 2007). From the data collected in this study, there was a significant change in student leadership practice after an experiential orientation. The hypothesis for this study was that through an experiential leadership orientation, student leaders would grow significantly in leadership practice. From this hypothesis, statistically significant differences between leadership practices were found in three of five core practices of the *SLPI* inventory. The three areas of Model the Way, Challenge the Process, and Enable Others to Act were not only were significant, but had effect sizes (*d* scores) over .3 which implies that if this test was repeated in a larger sample or population, scores could be similar. Two other practices, Inspire Others to Act and Encourage the Heart did not increase after the orientation and had less than moderate effect sizes (below 0.3).

### Leadership Practices

**Model the way.** Kouzes and Posner (2008) defined the leadership practice of model the way as students who choose to live lifestyles of positive behavior and action and then become respected by others and eventually valued as leaders. Student leaders who began this program were in their sophomore, junior, or senior year and were selected

based on criteria of maturity, willingness, and program fit. Many students in the sample entered with prior knowledge, understanding, and practice from previous leadership experiences. However, within the student life leadership orientation, the sample was exposed to several opportunities that led to personal examination of values, beliefs, and talents—all foundational components to leadership development according to Komives and Wagner (2009). Students were given opportunities to take personal introspective time and participate in small group discussions, along with learning positive traits of a student leader which tie directly to intrapersonal development. From foundation in self-awareness, students began to mature in leadership practice by becoming mindful of self, responsibility, and behavior. An important aspect of model the way leadership practice is the skill of personal reflection. In order to clarify values, beliefs, and understanding, leaders were asked throughout the orientation to journal, incorporate the use of quiet times, and critically reflect on their leadership roles within the hall or group they served.

Relating to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, the program not only incorporated concepts of model the way, but also utilized all four experiential learning phases of basic understanding, reflective understanding, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. For example, within the journaling/quiet time session, students began the session with a basic grasp of the topic of leadership they were asked to reflect upon and ended with reflective writing. During that time, students reflected, critically thought, and then wrote about their thought processes. From this task, all four Kolb types were used in order to create a greater leadership understanding within the students' practice. Overall, within the student leadership orientation the practice of model the way

was developed through specific experiential learning initiatives leading to significant growth.

**Challenge the process.** Challenge the process is a vital component of leadership maturation. Komives and Wagner (2009) explained that a student's growth in self-awareness leads to a strong conviction and, when coupled with passion, students become change agents who are "convicted to act." Kouzes and Posner (2008) noted that "Leaders seize the initiative with enthusiasm, determination, and a desire to make something develop when they are energized by the challenges of a difficult experience" (p. 76).

Within the experiential orientation, students were presented with several risk-taking, critical thinking, and difficult group learning experiences. Kouzes & Posner (2008), Komives et al. (2007), and Loeb (2009) agreed that students who participate in leadership experiences with a foundation of self-awareness will be inspired to set the example, take risks, engage in meaningful service, and become catalysts for change. In order to introduce the element of challenge, professionals apart from the orientation created problem-solving situations called "roadblocks." In a roadblock, students were faced with intense critical thinking situations involving initiatives that would handicap the student leaders' abilities (ex. removal of verbal communication, timed situations). Kolb's theory of experiential learning is seen within challenge the process as students were trained to understand, reflect, think, and then act in all situations. For example, within the role-play situations, students were assigned specific situations that each leader would need to confront and respond to in a holistic manner (i.e., quiet hours' enforcement, alcohol consumption in the hall). Students were encouraged to use previous knowledge of situations, reflect before the situation began, think conceptually on their

feet, and finally experiment through action. The growth from these experiences was profound as students had a safe atmosphere to practice challenging the process, especially with a delicate topic such as alcohol-related poisoning or a domestic violence case. From the significant growth in challenge the process, students were exposed to skills of interpersonal development including: collaboration, self-awareness, moral development, and team critical thinking. Overall, with an empowered awareness for change, students came to understand the leadership practice of challenge the process due to well-thought, planned, and structured experiences that tested students practically to apply their knowledge.

**Enable others to act.** In the leadership practice of enable others to act, student leaders grew significantly on average from 24.78 to 25.78 with a significance of .010. Roberts (2007) explained that leadership means “to labor together by joining in a mutual endeavor and common purpose” (p. 34). Within the enable others to act practice, student leaders move from a leader-centric point of view to a leadership collaborative or non-hierarchical view of leadership, establishing a united collaborative movement (Komives et al., 2005).

From the leadership orientation’s intentional team design, the concept of leadership collaborative was taught in the purist form. Students were assigned to themed teams of diverse members including other resident assistants, commuter assistants, and student directors. Through these thematic teams, student leaders were asked to complete experiences that taught teamwork, collaboration, service, resilience, and determination. One such experience was a relay that focused less on individual capability and more on teamwork and team strategy. By all accounts, the concept of enabling others to act was

reinforced on daily basis during the orientation as students were asked to participate in small group discussions and team initiatives. As noted in chapter two, when trust and positive interactions form between the student leader and the group, a sense of a shared responsibility or group buy-in is established. Within this state of shared responsibility, student leaders can delegate and enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Overall, the focus from self to team brought students out of a leader-centric state into a leadership practice that included others in accomplishing a common goal (Logue et al., 2005).

**Remaining practices.** Although Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart increased, the increases were not significant. Both of the practices pertain to a leader's potential to interact and communicate with others. It was not clear what caused the lack of significance within these two practices; however, one of the core growth areas for the program was communication and encouragement. Although statistically no significant changes occurred after the intervention, students increased from pre-test to post-test in both leadership practices. Tasks in which leaders participated in these areas involved discussion-based teams, initiatives, and fellowship community services. For example, students reflected on their current leadership practice and listened to others. This practice elicited fruitful results as students were encouraged to reflect, think, and listen before speaking. Students were given components of experiential learning; however, in future practice, encouragement and inspiration should be added foci within these times, as this could be a key to strengthening the student leadership orientation.

Student leadership is a continuous and transformative development process. The present student leadership orientation was created with the understanding that students learn by experience. A side note that is worthy of discussion is Kolb's experiential

learning theory and leadership development. As discussed in the literature review and throughout, Kolb's (1984) theory is an informative theory for educational practice due to the significance place on the experience of the learner. Kolb highlighted the phases of learning (basic understanding, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) that students would encounter when they were in a specific experience. Kolb's perspective is an important addition for leadership orientations as students move from experience to experience. Whether during individual time or group initiatives, they process each experience allowing for deeper understanding. From observation of the test data and the orientation experience, Kolb's phases appear to be on a continuum in which students move through a cycle of understanding, observing, conceptualizing, and acting in order to grow from basic concrete leadership experience to a new level of leadership experience. After the experience is finished and new experience begins, the student leader continues to grow along the leadership development continuum.

### **Implications**

Higher education and student development practitioners can benefit from the current findings on student leadership, specifically with regard to development of student leadership through an orientation. Student leadership learning is a constant, transformative process that requires intentional shaping and guidance from professional educators. In terms of leadership orientations, future practitioners should be aware of the opportunities, experiences, and teachings they prepare for student leaders. These trainings must not be haphazard, but rather advised by best practice research, theory, standards, and experiential learning theory. The present study was conducted with student life



student leaders (resident assistants and commuter assistants). Program directors in these areas will benefit from an understanding that these positions require intensive training and preparation for students to grow, learn, and develop as leaders—even after orientation.

Several components of the orientation examined in the current study are implicated in the fostering of leadership development. Individual time allowed students to step away from the daily training and reflect on what they were learning. The continued and expanded use of this practice will allow educators to deepen student learning and possibly further advance program goals.

Team problem solving tasks fostered critical thinking and collaboration among groups of students around a “roadblock” situation, which empowered students to work together, assess situations, and act. The future implementation of this practice will aid programs that deal with student conduct situations, on-campus programming, and reaching students who are on the fringe of a campus community. Finally, the use of team dynamics fostered positive involvement and collaborative effort from student leaders within the study, leading to a positive learning experience for all. Future use of team concepts will allow students to think outside the hierarchal leadership approach and move toward a leadership collaborative, as well as emphasize the necessity for unity within program implementation.

Overall, a focus on student involvement and ownership in training will aid program directors and educators in future practice. From this study, programs are encouraged to assess, understand, and create environments for student leadership learning that are dynamic, reflective, focused on best practices, challenging, involve taking risks,

incorporate team dynamics, and properly encourage student leaders to grow and understand their personal best leadership practices.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study were threefold. First, there was no control group as a part of the methodology, only the conducting of pre-test and post-test within the same sample. The goal of the study was to understand the growth from before intervention to after; however, lacking a control prevents this study from being a true experiment. In the future, the incorporation of a control sample, as well as an analysis of a variance over multiple periods of training would be fruitful best practice additions. Second, the data collection occurred at a small, private, Christian institution on the west coast, making the sample relatively homogeneous. In the future, a comparison between multiple institutions (public and private) and programs (e.g., student government, activities, athletic captains, club presidents) would expand the research in order to understand leadership development. Finally, from the research design, the hypothesis was designed on the possibility of increase in leadership practice from orientation and also generalized that experiential learning theory was a common contributor to this growth; however, this was not completely developed due to lack of experiential learning measurement. In the future, researchers should construct quantitative and qualitative designs that meet all criteria for experiential learning and study their effects on leadership, especially within short-term orientations, training, and as long-term semester and college experience studies.

## **Conclusion**

Higher education is a core-learning environment for students, specifically within the realm of leadership development (Astin & Astin, 2001; Roberts, 2007; Thelin, 2004). According to many theories, models, and experts, student leadership begins with an awareness of self, a desire to model a change, and willingness to collaborate with others in order to fulfill a common purpose (Komives & Wagner, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Owens, 2011). However, facilitating leadership learning and development is not a haphazard programming process, but rather requires an intentional, well-developed, standard-backed, theory-based experience that fosters leadership growth in students (Wagner, 2011).

Within purposeful experiential leadership programs, a leader is developed through a transformative and continuous process in which the student perceives and processes experiences in order to grow and develop in leadership practice (Kolb, 1984; Owens, 2011). A structural component of leadership programs that provides a variety of growth and development experiences is an experiential student leader orientation. Student leaders need atmospheres of experience in which to test their leadership practice, especially among peers and professionals with whom they will work with on a daily basis throughout the school year (Dewey, 1938; Knelflekamp & Widick, 1984; Owen, 2011). Furthermore, the importance of understanding a student leader's identity, learning style, and leadership abilities in orientation is valuable to student affairs professionals who advise student leadership groups, especially when preparing for a new year.

Overall, student leadership is a learning outcome that can be fostered over a week-long orientation. Preparation by the professionals leading the orientation is

imperative to creating an experience that fosters leadership understanding. Through Kolb's experiential learning theory, as well as the many leadership theories and models within higher education, students will be trained to understand, reflect, conceptualize, and experiment within their own leadership experiences in order to continue personal development. Therefore, leadership can be developed through experiential orientation atmospheres, specifically as this study demonstrated, through enhanced leadership practice in three key areas: Model the Way, Challenge the Process, and Enable Others to Act. The practices of Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart lacked significance in the present study. However, it is important to remember that these two practices are a part of leadership development and should be emphasized; without positive interaction with others, leadership collaborative and follower exchange will break down. All five of these practices are key foundations to leadership development and can be developed through intentional, well-structured learning experiences within large groups, small groups, and individualized development moments. The key to this development starts with professionals and higher education administrators creating programs that empower these developments. May we continue to expand and develop the programs we offer to student leaders, through the growth of student leadership programs. We will better serve the field of education by creating the next generation of leaders who will carry on the collaborative change.

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## Appendix: Orientation Layout

**LEAD SERVE**  
**SURVIVOR**  
**EMPOWER**

WELCOME TO SURVIVOR! WE ARE AMPLED WITH YOU AND BACK WITH US EXPERIENCE AND WITH MORE WITH US! YOU'VE BE FOR A GREAT ADVENTURE!

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 25**

- 8:30am - **REUNITING THE TRIBES** - M31 & CTS (intro)
- 9:00-9:45 - **NATIONS** (Breakfast) - Lobby
- 9:00-9:30 - **OUR TRIBE'S MOMENT** - 204 - What is Student Life all about and what are we trying to accomplish?
- 9:30-10:30 - **REWARD CHALLENGE** - 204 (Anna)
- 10:30-10:45 - **TAKE A BREATH** - 204
- 10:45-11:45 - **I HAVE TO DO WHAT!** - 204 - Your favorite SRO's & SCOD share their vision and will help you to test any questions you may have about the nifty-gritty details of the SRA & CA job's
- 12:00-1:00 - **NATIONS** (Lunch) - Lobby
- 1:00-1:45 - **PACK YOUR BAGS**
- 1:45 - **THE GREAT DEPARTURE**—Meet in the Gym parking lot
- 2:30 - **SET UP CAMP**
- 3:30-4:30 - **REWARD CHALLENGE**
- 4:30-5:30 - **TRIBAL COUNCIL** - Team Tribal
- 5:30-6:30 - **NATIONS** (Dinner)

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 26**

- 8:00-8:45 - **NATIONS** (Breakfast) - Lobby
- 9:00-9:30 - **OUR TRIBE'S MOMENT** - 204 - What is Student Life all about and what are we trying to accomplish?
- 9:30-10:30 - **REWARD CHALLENGE** - 204 (Anna)
- 10:30-10:45 - **TAKE A BREATH** - 204
- 10:45-11:45 - **I HAVE TO DO WHAT!** - 204 - Your favorite SRO's & SCOD share their vision and will help you to test any questions you may have about the nifty-gritty details of the SRA & CA job's
- 12:00-1:00 - **NATIONS** (Lunch) - Lobby
- 1:00-1:45 - **PACK YOUR BAGS**
- 1:45 - **THE GREAT DEPARTURE**—Meet in the Gym parking lot
- 2:30 - **SET UP CAMP**
- 3:30-4:30 - **REWARD CHALLENGE**
- 4:30-5:30 - **TRIBAL COUNCIL** - Team Tribal
- 5:30-6:30 - **NATIONS** (Dinner)

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 27**

- 8:45 - **THE TRIBE HAS SPOKEN** - worship, testimony (Dora & Purse Tribes)
- 8:00 - **TRIBE FREE!** - You are free to move about the cabin, err, the campground
- 9:00-9:45 - **NATIONS** (Breakfast)
- 10:00-10:30 - **ORATORIAL** (SRO/SCOD)
- 10:30-12:00 - **REWARD CHALLENGE** - Raging River
- 12:30-1:30 - **NATIONS** (Lunch)
- 1:30-2:00 - **EMPIRE ISLAND** - solo time
- 2:00-3:00 - **MESSAGES FROM THE CHURCH DIRECTOR** - Learning to connect through programming (professional staff)
- 3:00-4:00 - **REWARD CHALLENGE** - like challenge
- 4:00-5:00 - **TRIBAL COUNCIL** - Team Tribal
- 5:00-6:00 - **NATIONS** (Dinner)
- 6:45 - **THE TRIBE HAS SPOKEN** - worship, testimonies (Purse & Feed Tribes)
- 8:00 - **TRIBE FREE!** - You are free to move about the cabin, err, the campground

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 28**

- 9:00-9:45 - **NATIONS** (Breakfast)
- 9:45-11:00 - **THE TRIBE HAS SPOKEN** - worship, testimonies (Yellow & Orange Tribes)
- 11:00-12:00 - **REWARD CHALLENGE** - pack up/clean-up challenge
- 12:00 - **BACK TO CAMPUS**
- 12:30-1:30 - **NATIONS** (Lunch) - Lobby
- 1:30-5:00 - **TRIBE FREE!** - The afternoon is free! Please use it wisely to finish getting settled, to get your floors and/or lobby ready or to prep for Orientation
- 5:00-6:00 - **NATIONS** (Dinner) - Lobby - A chance to mingle with the families of your professional staff
- 6:00 - **TRIBE FREE!** - This evening is yours! Please use it wisely to finish getting settled and/or to get your floors and/or lobby ready or to prep for Orientation

**Important Dates You Need to Know!**

- NEW STUDENTS, ARRIVE ON CAMPUS - FRIDAY SEPT 2 AT 5AM (BUT BE PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE EARLY ARRIVALS)**
- RETURNING STUDENTS, ARRIVE ON CAMPUS - SUN, SEPT 4 BY 6:00PM (BUT BE READY 1 PM)**

**THE TRIBE HAS SPOKEN**

*Orientation A1 Layout*

Appendix: Orientation Layout, cont.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 29**

- 8:00-8:45 - RATIONALS (Breakfast) - Lobby
- 9:00-10:00 - WHEN ALL HEALTH BREAKS LOOSE - Our Wellness Center professor-as will share everything you need to know about crisis management, mental health issues, suicide policy and confidentiality.
- 10:00-10:15 - TAKE A BREATH
- 10:15-11:45 - REDEMPTION ISLAND - An important discussion on Redemptive Discipline dealing with conflict and confrontation and our Amnesty Policy.
- 12:00-1:00 - RATIONALS (Lunch) - Lobby
- 1:10-2:10 - RESCUE 911 - LR 204 - Learn how to respond in the event of an emergency.
- 2:10-3:00 - YOU GOT SLAM-MED - Budget training, taking advantage of the resources in your Student Life Assistant Manual. **"If you have a laptop, please bring it for this session."** (SRDVS/SCD)
- 3:00-5:30 - IMMUNITY CHALLENGE - Lobby - That is what you've all been waiting for. ROLE PLAYS!
- 6:45-7:45 - TRIBAL COUNCIL - Lobby - District Role Plays

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 30**

- 8:00-1:00 - TO SAVE A LIFE - CPR Training - 204
- 9:00-12:00 - CHECKING YOUR WINDOWS & MIRRORS - Those not involved in CPR have some time to get your area ready for incoming students.
- 12:15-1:30 - RATIONALS - Lunch - Dining Hall
- 1:30-2:30 - KNOWING OUR ADDRESS - An in-depth look at the students we will be serving this year.
- 2:30-5:00 - CHECKING YOUR WINDOWS & MIRRORS - The afternoon is yours to get your area ready for incoming students.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31**

- 8:00-8:30 - RATIONALS - Breakfast
- 8:45 - ALL STUDENT LEADER TRAINING
- 12:15 - RATIONALS - Dining Hall
- 1:15 - ALL STUDENT LEADER TRAINING
- 5:30 - RATIONALS - Dining Hall
- 6:45 - WORSHIP/COMMUNION SERVICE

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1**

- 8:00-8:30 - RATIONALS - Breakfast
- 9:30-10:00 - THE SURVIVOR FINALE - One last gathering to make sure that we are all ready for the pending revelation (A & CLS)
- 10:00-12:00 - CHECKING YOUR WINDOWS & MIRRORS - Still have some work to do to get ready? Here's some time for you to do it! \*\*Please be here if you may be asked to devote some of this time to assisting with Orientation prep and set-up!
- 12:15-1:00 - RATIONALS - Lunch - Dining Hall
- 1:30-5:00 - CHECKING YOUR WINDOWS & MIRRORS - Still have some work to do to get ready? Here's some time for you to do it! \*\* see above
- 5:30-6:30 - RATIONALS - Dinner - Dining Hall **Be sure to attend or we will be sending this email for student leaders!**
- 7:00 - CHECKING YOUR WINDOWS & MIRRORS - Still have some work to do to get ready? Here's your last chance to finalize everything!

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2**

- 8:00-9:30 - RATIONALS - Breakfast
- 9:00 - NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION BEGINS

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5**

- 7:00-9:00pm - YOUR VERY FIRST FLOOR/COMMUNITY EVENT!

**LEAD SERVE SURVIVOR EMPPOWER**

**STUDENT LIFE ORIENTATIONAL WEEK 2021**

*Orientation Day 2021*

