Leadership at the University

As part of its goal to promote leadership and leadership opportunities on campus, the Office of Leadership Development will begin publishing quarterly informational newsletters. It is our hope that you enjoy this initial issue of our newsletter!

The newsletters will feature monthly guest columns from leaders across campus and throughout our community. The featured authors will offer insight, wisdom and information critical to the concepts associated with leadership. This newsletter will also serve as a way to publicize different leadership opportunities, events, and developments across campus. Feel free to contact us with appropriate submissions using our contact information located at the end of the newsletter.

This issue features articles from Amy Bergerson, Lori McDonald, and Pablo Martinez; who respectively discuss what leadership is, provide leadership tips, and help inform students of how to best host an event on campus.

The mission of the Office of Leadership Development at the University of Utah centers on inciting students to actions that encourage campus and community civic engagement and service; this translates into opportunities that enrich and support personal and academic growth and culminates in a lifelong commitment to effective leadership.
Because no one is born a leader: The 5th Annual Learning to Lead Conference

Looking to meet students from across campus? Looking to develop your leadership skills? Want to foster, refine, or challenge your own leadership style? Then come to the 5th Annual Learning to Lead Conference!

The Learning to Lead Conference, hosted by the Office of Leadership Development, the ASUU Presenter’s Office, U Greeks and UPC, will take place Thursday, October 29, 2009 in the University Union, and will feature keynote speaker A.A. Akom, current professor of Environmental Sociology, Urban Education, and Africana Studies, and co-director of educational equity at the Cesar Chavez Institute at San Francisco State University. The conference is FREE to all University of Utah students, staff, and faculty, and $5 to anyone not affiliated with the U.

A.A. Akom is one of the most important emerging voices on anti-racism, environmental justice, and educational equity in the US. A writer, activist, and educator, he has spoken on numerous college and high school campuses including UC Berkeley, Stanford, and Harvard. His work offers comprehensive solutions and inspirational models for two of America’s biggest social problems—environmental degradation and educational underachievement. His unique way of addressing race, class, gender and other intersections of social difference not only serve to rejuvenate hope, but also create new leadership frameworks for reducing health and educational disparities in our classrooms and communities. A.A. Akom is also the founder of Youth as Public Intellectuals (YPI), a youth empowerment organization committed to issues of environmental justice and educational equity.

In addition to the keynote speaker, the conference will feature various workshops aimed at emerging, and experienced student leaders, as well as the general student body. Topics range from incorporating leadership into your career, to navigating the politics of higher education. We will also offer a workshop for staff and faculty interested in further enhancing their leadership and advisory skills.

This is a free conference; however, attendees need to pre-register online at www.sa.utah.edu/leadership. On-site registration will begin at 2:00pm; all attendees are required to check-in with their Ucards. Refreshments will be provided. For more information contact the Office of Leadership Development at 801.581.7069 or email us at leadership@sa.utah.edu.

Become an Orientation Leader!

The Office of New Student Orientation is now hiring Orientation Leaders for Summer 2010.

Becoming an Orientation Leader affords students with a great opportunity to develop leadership skills, network with students and other campus leaders, learn about the University, and meet new people!

Applications are due on October 27. Hiring occurs in November and training starts in the Spring!

Apply Now!

For more information contact the Office of New Student Orientation at 801.581.7069 or at www.sa.utah.edu/orientation

This could be you:
LEADERSHIP IS…
Reflections on leadership

By: Amy Bergerson
Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy

As a professor who teaches classes in leadership, I often ask students to define what leadership means to them. For most people, the response amounts to something like this: the ability to guide a group towards the achievement of a common goal. Seems pretty simple. Yet, when we start to unpack that, all kinds of complexities are revealed. For example, how does a person guide a group towards a goal? Or, more importantly who sets the goal? And, does leadership only reside in the formal group leader? What role do followers play? As a group, we attempt to resolve some of these questions, but others go unanswered. Defining leadership just isn’t that straightforward. For some people that fact is frustrating, but for me, the ambiguity of leadership is what makes it so much fun to study.

What’s in a word? Stop for a minute and think about whether you consider yourself a “leader.” Many students don’t. For some, it’s the word itself; the implication that leadership resides in one formal leader is incongruent with their cultural or personal values of community building. For these students, seeing themselves as a member of a collective is far more important than being designated as a leader. But, I think most of the students I have the opportunity to teach are leaders. Maybe the fact that they are enrolled in an Educational Leadership and Policy program feeds that impression. I’m willing to bet, though, that if I were a fly on the wall in the diverse communities these students serve, I would see them in leadership roles, even when they don’t define themselves as leaders. What troubles me is that sometimes the values that enhance their leadership aren’t recognized and rewarded in organizations that are based in a white, western paradigm. Part of my teaching strives to help students learn how important it is to see the benefits of diverse approaches to leadership in organizations, and to become leaders who value this diversity to the extent that they honor it with recognition and reward.

How do we learn to be leaders? Most of us can recall examples of “good” and “bad” leaders we’ve worked with. For many people, observing leadership in their own experiences is the strongest influence on their own leadership. Not many of us have the opportunity to take a class that allows (or forces) us to ponder leadership for an entire semester.

We may not know the formal names of leadership styles such as cognitive leadership, collaborative leadership, or charismatic leadership. What we do know is that we want to emulate the characteristics we see in leaders we think are effective, and avoid behaviors practiced by those we view as ineffective.

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REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP:

Fortunately, theory typically backs up our intuitive hunches: leaders who involve the group in processes are far more effective than those who use coercion to influence; leaders who learn to use political processes and coalitions to enhance their power for the good of the group are more influential than those who get wrapped up in amassing power for themselves; and leaders who communicate their goals and the information necessary to achieve those objectives have more loyal followers than those who hoard information to retain power. There are many ways to lead, but being able to read the needs of the group and then meet those needs is one key aspect of effective leadership.

What should be important to leaders? It used to be that being tall, male, and white were considered the most important traits in leaders. Fortunately, we are moving away from the idea that leaders embody certain traits, and are focusing more on the functions of leadership as a process. A leader in this model must be committed to his or her values, and thoughtful in their application to organizational settings. They must also value the group learning that takes place in an organization. And, they must recognize the benefits that diversity brings to a group. In my mind, every leader must embrace their role as a change agent – one working for social change that allows individuals and organizations to benefit from the broad range of voices in today’s society.

Leadership for change. Imagine a leader of an organization saying that his or her vision for the group was to maintain the status quo. I’m guessing that not many people would consider this individual an effective leader. All of us want leaders who are able to take the group to a new level, and who inspire the leadership that resides in each of us. Leaders focused on social change have the potential to make an enormous difference in organizations and in the larger society -- if they are willing to take the risks associated with being a champion for change. Leading for social change means engaging in difficult conversations with others who don’t buy into your agenda. It means being challenged and challenging others. It means pushing for change in the very meaning of leadership. And, it means having to constantly return to your individual values as a source of strength. Sound difficult? It is. But, in my opinion, the rewards of leading for social change far outweigh the challenges. Seeing an organization grow and learn from the diversity of opinions that are welcomed in a collaborative environment is one benefit. Developing the leadership potential in each group member is another. Working together to decide what the values and vision of the organization are benefits everyone in the group. Finally, understanding the ripple effect of the empowerment and group success that can result from this kind of leadership gives me hope that the small changes I enact day to day will contribute to a larger level social change. And that, to me, is what leadership is all about.

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I have been at the University for almost 8 years, and as such I have definitely experienced great memories in the University Union. Countless lunches, naps and conferences, but my favorite moment of all, was the day when M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan) had their annual high school conference, and myself along with Richard Diaz, a friend and companion, engaged high school students in an empowering protest at the heart of the cafeteria: “What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!” Those were the roaring words of youth at the Union, who were overwhelmed by the constant oppression they felt by the current anti-migratory policies and rhetoric established by the Utah legislature. The Union has served me as a student, as a leader and now as a graduate assistant. It truly is my second home.

Working at the Union Administration office has given me a lot of exposure to different types of leaders and leadership styles.

It’s a pleasure to introduce myself and get to know the student leaders, as well as serve their needs and requests. As I mentioned above, I’m a graduate assistant, working currently under Karol Conrad, the Union Reservation Specialist. Technically, I’m in charge of all events both inside and outside of the Union, as well as the lawn areas along the patio. It’s incredible how many students walk by the Union on a daily basis; it is estimated that over 20,000 students partake in the Union during the first couple of weeks of school. These demographics are of great interest to us and hopefully to you, as we strive day by day to be the heart of our college community and meeting place for your occasion. Additionally, the Union serves student leaders, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests.
UNION SERVICES:

We are an organization that offers a variety of services, programs and activities that, when taken together, facilitates the execution of well-planned events that serve the larger University and surrounding communities.

By now, you may be wondering how you can reserve space at the Union. Well here are some tips and important information you should know:

- **Room Rental**: All rooms are available for rent by both University groups or guests, some rooms are free and others cost a small fee, if you are with a student group you will receive a discount, which could help with the realization of your event.

- **Marketing**: There are plenty of ways you can market and promote your event; from renting our glass displays to posting a flyer on our digital monitors.

- **Entertainment**: If you are looking for entertainment, the Union is the right place for you, from our recently opened outdoor volleyball/badminton court to our crimson commons where the bowling alley and billiards are located.

- **Leadership**: The Union promotes leadership through the Union Programming Council, which offers plenty of service opportunities and partnerships in which your student group can partake.

The Union hours of operation for the Fall and Spring semesters are:

- Monday – Thursday: 7:30 am – 11:00 pm
- Friday: 7:30 am - midnight
- Saturday: 8:00 am - midnight
- Sunday: 11:00 am – 9:00 pm

For more information, please feel free to contact me at pablo.martinez@utah.edu.

LEADERSHIP TIP OF THE MONTH:

All too often, I also hear from student leaders about late nights preparing for events and taking on more and more commitments both within their responsibilities of leadership and non-related opportunities.

The stress and over-commitment can take their toll on not only the student’s academic success, but their health and relationships with family and friends.

If you are nodding your head or remembering the last time you pressed the “send” button too quickly on an email due to being too tired to think straight, I have a suggestion to help. You first need to learn to raise your tongue to the top of your mouth while using your voice box to say one word, “no.” It is one syllable and is generally recognizable in multiple languages as a negative response to a request or commitment.

Student leaders become recognized for their enthusiasm and skills in communication, planning, and even just generally doing it all. University administrators, faculty, employers, community members, and other students can find it easy to ask more and more of outstanding leaders. It is okay to “just say no,” particularly when there are academic demands on you and a very important (though often ignored) need to sleep, eat, and take time to regroup mentally, emotionally, and physically. This is not to say that student leaders should not take advantage of opportunities for networking or assisting with new projects, but rather it is a plea for student leaders to find balance in their lives.

Strategies to balance classes, work, a social life, and leadership is a topic of much advice in commercial literature and the ability to achieve perfect balance is allusive. However, it begins with examining our commitments and giving ourselves permission to decline an offer to take on another role or project. My own friends and colleagues remind me of this all the time, so I acknowledge that it is difficult. However I have grown to appreciate the necessity of balance and I am striving to reach a better level of it for my own life.

I may not be able to lend much advice on how to fix the fashion embarrassments or to recall an email, but I can encourage student leaders to balance their lives by reminding them to study, sleep, and not feel that they have to do it all.

Union Mission Statement:

“The A. Ray Olpin Union is the community center of campus and complements the academic mission of the University. The Union cultivates an environment that nourishes the mind, body, and spirit of the community, by providing social, cultural, and recreational opportunities. The Union values diversity and promotes a safe atmosphere, where students are inspired to realize their potential.”
The Leadership Resource Center

The Leadership Resource Center is located in room 280 of the University Union. The Leadership Resource Center is available to all students and staff who are interested in developing their leadership skills.

The Leadership Resource Center contains many books on leadership, as well as opportunities for networking with other people on campus who have expertise in different areas of leadership.

Currently, we are developing a database of leadership opportunities for students to utilize that will include descriptions of positions and a timeline for applications. Contact us for more information about how your student group can advertise through our office.

The Leadership Resource Center welcomes all students and staff who are interested in leadership and in developing leadership skills; we encourage you all to take advantage of all the opportunities available.

For more information about the Leadership Resource Center contact the Office of Leadership Development at 801.581.7069 or email us at leadership@sa.utah.edu.

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UPCOMING UNIVERSITY & LEADERSHIP EVENTS
(click on links for more information)

October 19 – 23: Asian American Awareness Week; Black Student Union (BSU): Community Service Activity

October 20: Law Day

October 26: Marriott Library Renovation

October 27 – 28: Wellness Fair

October 29: Learning to Lead 5th Annual Conference

October 30: Black Pumpkin Affair

November 13: Pacific Islander Student Association (PISA) High School Day

November 14: Pow-Wow; Asian American Student Association (AASA) High School Day

November 17: Service House Dialogue

If you have an event you want to see listed here, email us at leadership@sa.utah.edu