

Teaching Leadership in the Community College

In July 2018, I attended and completed an intensive Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Leadership Development Studies Program seminar. Upon conclusion, my classmates and I were certified to teach and disseminate information about leadership to our colleagues and students. When I returned to my home campus, I was determined to introduce a Leadership Development Studies course for students at my college. Below is how I accomplished that goal, and some insight into and lessons learned from the process.

The Gathering Phase

Though my journey starts with the PTK seminar, someone in pursuit of teaching a leadership course does not need to do the same. Below is an outline that individuals at institutions can follow to achieve successful introduction of a Leadership Development Studies course into academic programs.

Academic Dean Discussion

The Humanities course HUM 230: Leadership Development is a course offered within the North Carolina Community College Library. Interested faculty need to explore their state's course offerings and see if a comparable one is available. If not, new courses can be added to your state's library, though it is a rather arduous process. Once I found HUM 230, I spoke with my academic dean, pitched my idea for a Leadership Development Studies course, and together we started the process of adding the course to as many academic programs as possible. I should add that having a graduate degree in English allows me to teach HUM courses at Isothermal Community College (ICC), but accreditation policies vary between institutions and thus must be taken into consideration.

Curriculum Committee Awareness

Get to know your curriculum committee representatives and make them aware of the course you want to add. Generating awareness of the course is crucial for implementing it into academic programs, credit transferability, and the overall likelihood of the course gaining traction. At ICC, HUM 230 is currently offered as a pre-major elective within the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science programs as part of an articulation agreement with our state universities. Some internal programs, such as Criminal Justice, have given their students the option to take the class and request a course substitution. Currently, we are working to spread the course

to more programs, particularly in the Business Science area.

The Building Phase

Let's assume your Leadership Development Studies course has been approved and is now being offered. What should the course look like? How do you get students to enroll? Below are some strategies I used to develop my own course.

Course Design

A key component I knew I wanted in my course was for each student to develop his or her own personal leadership philosophy over the semester. However, to do that, I first had to examine and establish my own leadership philosophy. Personally, I understood and accepted that being the instructor of the course did not mean I knew everything about leadership. As a result, I knew I wanted to divide the course into units and have a guest speaker for each one who would also contribute to students experiencing leadership from a variety of perspectives. I created course units based on the course's textbook, Leadership Development Studies: A Humanities Approach, 5th edition, edited by Monika Byrd and Susan Edwards, and identified and contacted colleagues I considered to be leaders in each unit's subject.¹ This group included my college's president, vice presidents, faculty chairs, professional development chairs, various coordinators, IT members, and a student services representative. I met with each person to discuss the course's goals and unit's objectives, as well as to give them student-generated questions about the unit to review before their visit.

Course Assignments

Below is a brief overview of the types of assignments included in my course, but if anyone reading this piece would like more detailed information pertaining to classroom activities, lesson plans, sample syllabi or course schedules, readings, film clips, or more, please feel free to contact me.

- *Short Readings and Movie Clips.* Several short readings from the textbook and various movie clips helped facilitate class discussions. Some readings and movie clips required discussion responses in written format.
- *Guest Speaker Reflections.* Students completed a reflection assignment following each guest speaker visit. I also gave the compilation of reflection responses to the guest speakers.

¹The units are Personal Leadership Philosophy, Ethical Leadership, Leading With Goals, Articulating a Vision, Making Decisions, Team Building, Empowering Others, Servant Leadership, Guiding Through Conflict, and Realizing Change.

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- *Required Essays.* A midterm paper in which students focus on a historical figure and connect that person with a leadership unit from the textbook. A character analysis essay in which students read a book from a provided list and analyze the leadership qualities of characters within that text. A final paper that serves as a reflective piece regarding students' understanding of leadership and an exploration of what leadership qualities students possess.

Marketing the Course

I cannot stress enough the importance of seeking help when attempting to build awareness of any new elective course being offered. Here are some strategies I found to be successful:

- *Campus Print Shop.* Print shop employees are experts at what they do, and these are the professionals in possession of the skills and equipment needed to bring marketing ideas to fruition. I have worked with our staff to create flyers, banners, posters, and more to generate awareness of the new course.
- *Graphic Design Department.* This is a great opportunity to allow your institution's students to engage in classroom projects which, in turn, are beneficial for all involved parties. Students can add artwork to their portfolios and you can use the information designed by students to market the course.
- *College Marketing or Communications Director.* Work with this individual to share marketing-related course materials via the college's website, social media pages, signs, billboards, and other dissemination vehicles.
- *IT Department or Technology-Enhanced Learning Coordinators.* Most institutions use some form of learning management software (LMS). Students, we hope, login to these platforms daily. What better way to promote a new course than to partner with your IT staff and have banners containing your new course and contact information appear on the college's LMS? These individuals can also assist in releasing mass emails that contain pertinent information about the course to students.
- *Advising and Success Center or Faculty Advisors.* Advisors cannot tell their advisees about your new course if they don't know about it! Make sure advisors are in possession of any marketing materials and necessary information about the course, especially during advising and registration periods.
- *Administrative Assistants and Maintenance/Custodial Staff.* Too many people forget the crucial role these individuals play in our students' lives. They encounter students daily in the hallways and, oftentimes, they speak with our students more than we do. For these reasons, make sure all staff is aware of your new offering!

The Implementation Phase

In closing, I wish to offer some simple tips for the ongoing vitality of a Leadership Development Studies course.

Plan Early and Involve Others. These two things are key to obtaining enough students to run the course and extremely pertinent to the course's success. While you can certainly teach a leadership class from one perspective, my students seemed to thoroughly enjoy a well-rounded perspective from the college's leaders. There was also something they loved about the fact that guest speakers were people I thought of as leaders and respected as colleagues.

Be Fluid and Go With the Flow. While planning for this class (like any) is vital, I love seeing where conversations take the group, and each class session and topic is different and exciting. Be open to allowing class discussions or interests direct the course of classes and content.

Create Different Experiences. Instructors should keep things fresh when teaching this course. Change your readings and movies and change and rotate guest speakers if you choose to use them. Your colleagues will probably thank you, too.

Keep Marketing. Just because the course is a hit one semester does not mean it will continue to fill up without adequate and continual marketing.

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