Change in CHANGE:
Tracking first-year students’ conceptualizations of leadership in a themed living, learning community

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By
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Abstract

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A central tenet of Miami University’s mission and the goals of President David Hodge, student leadership development has become an increasingly important part of the Office Student Affairs and higher education. Nowhere is this focus more obvious than in the intentional leadership programming within the residence halls of the University. One of these residential communities, the CHANGE Living, Learning Community (LLC), works with first-year students to provide them with curricular and co-curricular experiences and to aid in their development and understandings of leadership. Despite observations and evaluations of other similar programs, additional research on these initiatives becomes a necessity in order to make changes and improvements to benefit leadership programs and student development at Miami.

Chronicling the experiences of 10 students in the CHANGE LLC over a six-month period, this study examines the effects of the different components of living, learning communities. Particularly targeting students who participate in the course EDL 306: Nature of Group Leadership, this study works to construct narratives to explore the practice of leadership at Miami and how these students interact with this conceptual structure. After discussing the theoretical basis of this study, common themes and ideas expressed by participants are identified and analyzed. Finally, this paper will make recommendations to the Office of Student Affairs and other University partners in order to help improve the experiences of students in the CHANGE community and across campus. Many of these suggestions target methods for clarification, intentional programming, and ideas to help build student buy-in. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the current programs and ways in which leadership development at Miami might be enhanced.
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INTRODUCTION

“Miami seeks academically ambitious undergraduates who will lead intellectually vigorous and productive lives... who will succeed, serve, and lead“ (2008)

–Dr. David Hodge, President of Miami University

Institutions of higher education have long sought to foster and develop the leadership capacities of their students. From leadership conferences, student-run organizations, and leadership development programs to service-learning activities and residence hall communities, many institutions have committed themselves to developing the next generation of leaders. Miami University is a part of this larger effort, seeking to develop leaders who are prepared to face an increasingly globalized and challenging world. Through campus-wide programs like the Wilks Leadership Institute, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, leadership training programs including LeaderShape or the Perlmutter Leadership Conference, and courses that focus on leadership and management, Miami has been quite intentional in seeking to produce citizen leaders. This study was designed to examine one of the most intentional of those efforts, residence hall living, learning communities focused on promoting leadership development.

As one of the stated goals of Miami University’s residential life curriculum, Miami seeks “to enable residents to become citizen leaders” (Residential Curriculum, 2009). The residential life curriculum is intended to be the framework for the co-curricular programs planned for students in Miami’s residence halls. One of the most logical points of contact between students and the University are the two years that students spend in residence halls on campus. Intentional programming and foci on leadership development provide a unique medium to watch and observe the effectiveness of leadership education in the residence halls at Miami University.
This study, using an inquiry-based qualitative method, is aimed at exploring one particular leadership-themed residential community at Miami. Entitled “CHANGE: Emerging Community Leaders,” this living, learning community emphasizes leadership education across the multiple aspects of the college experience, including both curricular and co-curricular experiences, relationship and community building, as well as student engagement. The recruitment literature provided to incoming students describes CHANGE as being “designed for emerging community leaders who are dedicated to putting their convictions into actions” (Residence Life LLC Literature, 2009). This LLC, located in Havighurst Hall, was formed as a community by numerous stakeholders and cross-campus partnerships including the Wilks Leadership Institute and the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, combining resources and ideas in order to create a seminal experience for the first-year students who participate.

One key aspect of CHANGE is the opportunity for students to engage in a leadership development course, EDL 306: the Nature of Group Leadership⁠, in order to compliment their out of class experiences. Four sections of the course, enrolling approximately 15 students each, are taught in the hall by Miami faculty and student affairs staff. The CHANGE community seeks to do what living, learning communities do best: create a learning environment where students can participate in both structured coursework and co-curricular and community experiences to expand their learning. CHANGE is intended to be a model living, learning community, but little research has been done to gauge effective components of the community and whether stated learning outcomes are being met.

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¹ The EDL 3066 course is designed to be an introductory course for students to learn about leadership. Usually run in conjunction with the CHANGE community, this course exposes students to many forms and beliefs of leaders, further outlined in the theoretical basis section and in Attachment F. This course was recently re-designated EDL 206: Nature of Group Leadership, beginning in the Spring Semester 2010.
This study will explore these areas and discuss the findings of the interviews while recommending areas for improvement and based on the research outcomes. Additionally, this study seeks to understand how ten first-year students who are in the CHANGE community think about leadership, how their thinking evolved during their first six months on campus, and what curricular and co-curricular dimensions of the CHANGE leadership living, learning community affect their thinking.

This paper will chronicle my findings and will be structured as follows: the opening sections will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the research, outline the structure and timeline of the study, focus on the selection and characteristics of the participants, include a timeline of the research, and explore the procedures used in data collection. After that, the paper will track the students as they progress through the study, pointing out themes and learning outcomes. The next section will evaluate the findings established throughout the study and discuss common trends located across student testimonies. Finally, this paper will conclude with recommendations for the Office of Residence Life and other University partners to improve and expand upon the successes of the CHANGE living, learning community.

The goal of the research was to construct narratives (Harrison, 2002; Richardson, 2000) that provided insight into the development and growth of students who live in the CHANGE living, learning community. While such an approach does not generate quantitative measures, the use of narratives provides concrete examples of this growth. Moreover, these narratives provide insight and comments on actual practice, an area that is often difficult to adequately measure solely using quantitative measurements.
Overall, this study will provide groundwork for future conversations and potential improvements to the CHANGE LLC and other residential communities at Miami. While, admittedly, there are already some successful transmission of student learning outcomes through leadership education and community development within the CHANGE community, the following data provide examples where such education can be improved. Demonstrated in the following sections, it is apparent that improvements in curricular, co-curricular, and informal components of leadership education need to be strengthened and reconceptualized if more intentional student change is to occur. Insights gained from these dialogues provide usable examples of student experiences in the residence halls at Miami University and offer insights on structural and institutional needs for this important area of the University.

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

At its base level, this study is an attempt to understand the effectiveness of living, learning communities in residence halls and the role that these structures play in student development. Current research demonstrates the noticeable impact that such thoughtful and intentional programming can have on student development and growth (Kurotsuchi Inkelas and Weisman, 2003; Kuh, 1995; Pike, 1999, Strassen, 2003; Zhao and D. Kuh, 2004). In addition, many of these studies describe factors that contribute to the success of living, learning communities and provide insights into the effects of curricular and non-curricular components of these communities. This area of student leadership development was specifically targeted in this study because these living, learning communities often serve as the primary touch point for the University and student affairs professionals who wish to help develop young leaders. As living, learning communities become more and more prevalent, the impact of the different components of the experience must be taken into account and investigated, an idea that forms the basis of this study.
In order for the Miami University Office of Residence Life (ORL) to establish standards across these communities that seek common goals in terms of student development, ORL has developed a curriculum that spans all residence halls and living, learning communities across campus (Appendix F). This curriculum sets base-level outcomes, including specific learning outcomes that directly relate with leadership—e.g., intrapersonal development or effective community engagement. These core principles inform the structure that LLC stakeholders, First-Year Advisors (FYAs), and Resident Advisors (RAs) use to plan programming and co-curricular experiences within the hall.

In the CHANGE LLC, this residential curriculum effects the actions and goals of the RAs and hall advisors in numerous ways. The curriculum empowers these individuals to look at the multiple ways in which students can be engaged in leadership in order to help each student in the building find meaningful methods in which to learn and develop leadership skills and talents. One such option is the opportunity to participate in the EDL 306 course. RAs also take on the responsibility of creating programs designed to help students explore leadership as well as facilitating discussions with residents about leadership and ways in which to get involved on campus with clubs and organizations.

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2 LLC Stakeholders are university partners who invest time and resources into the successful development of these communities, often advising RAs and FYAs in these communities while providing guiding frameworks and connections to other campus partners. For CHANGE, these stakeholders include the Wilks Leadership Institute, the Office of Community Service and Engagement, and the Office of Student Activities and Leadership among others.

3 FYAs are tasked with three main roles in each community in which they are present, often helping to set the direction of the community. These roles include the supervision of RAs and as well as many hall activities, the administrative/business aspects of running a residence hall, and serving as an academic advisor for many students within the hall.

4 RAs work to create community among residents through intentional programming and meaningful advisory relationships and as liaisons to the larger University community. Helping to direct the activity of the hall, these individuals help to enforce University policy.
The official curriculum and learning outcomes central to the style of leadership taught inside the community (but outside of the course) depend heavily on the head of hall/First-Year Advisor and RAs. The current First-Year Advisor, Brittany Garner, and RAs both mention a much stronger focus on social justice and social change model of leadership with past advisors. Garner describes this year’s focus as an attempt to make leadership accessible and to teach different forms of leadership (Garner, Interview, 2 February 2010). Programs were built around presenting multiple forms of leadership, yet a large importance was placed on service and participation in service activities—a conceptualization of leadership closely associated with the social change model.

This social change model of leadership (Figure 1) helps students develop an understanding of leadership as integrally connected to social justice and the idea that leaders have a responsibility to change the world for the better; the model is predicated on two central principles, social responsibility and change for the common good (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). As part of this model, leadership development is broken down into three important levels of understanding: individual, group, and societal levels of understanding. The social change model describes leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-driven process (HERI, 1996). Additionally, this model has been a central theoretical component to the current design and goals of both EDL 306 and the CHANGE community.
Moreover, Garner used the book *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2003) as a central theme among the RA staff within the building. This model maintains five key aspects of leadership education that are important for leadership education: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (Kouzes and Posner, 2003). These patterns among effective leaders, argue the authors, can help aspiring leaders to reflect and learn from their own experiences. The use of such literature, both the social change model and the leadership challenge model, provides some framework through which to view leadership education in the building.
Conversations with two randomly-selected RAs proved to be equally illuminating as far as the curriculum was concerned. Both RAs that I spoke with identified service and social justice as an important aspect of the style of leadership that they reinforced with residents during one-on-one conversations. Moreover, RAs mentioned how such an approach matched closely with the ORL residential curriculum and what they perceived to be the mission of the CHANGE LLC. Not as integrally involved in the course as Brittany Garner, these two RAs saw their role more as resources and support structures in the endeavor of leadership education, and less as educators in the traditional sense. Both strongly contended that a focus on the social justice model of leadership, multiple dimensions of leadership, and the value of service were important aspects of their views of the LLC.

Despite the overwhelming amount of literature detailing the importance and transformative nature of living, learning communities and their ability to merge curricular and co-curricular experiences together (Kurotsuchi Inkelas and Weisman, 2003; Pike 1999; Strassen 2003; Zhao & Kuh, 2004), relatively little information exists on the use of curricular experiences in residence halls to improve student development and self-understanding. As such, the primary formal structure of leadership education within the CHANGE community—EDL 306: The Nature of Group Leadership—is important to examine in order to situate the learning of the participants in this study. Central tenets and learning outcomes of the course include the examination of multiple approaches to leadership, exploring personal capacities and opportunities for leadership, and the exploration of the ethical and moral components of socially responsible leadership (Attachment F). The course is designed to be accessible to first-year students and aimed at a basic level of understanding self, as it relates to leadership and aspects of social responsibility to the community.
The CHANGE leadership course, EDL 306, is available to any student designated to live in the CHANGE Living, Learning Community—one of the larger residence halls on campus enrolling only first year students—and enrolls approximately 60 of the 290 students in the hall in the fall semester. The course is managed by a graduate assistant in the Office of Student Activities and Leadership and is taught by representatives of the various leadership offices across campus, including the Cliff Alexander Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and Leadership, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, as well as the Wilks Leadership Institute.

Dr. Kathleen Knight Abowitz, a professor in Miami’s Department of Educational Leadership and acting director of the Wilks Leadership Institute, was recently charged with revamping the old syllabus. When asked about her intentions with the course, she spoke about “[setting] up a narrative... I think that good courses tell stories...with a lot of openings for people to engage with these stories” (Knight Abowitz, Interview, 23 November 2009); as students engage in these narratives, they begin to see themselves as leaders and to place their experiences in larger, learning contexts. Much of the drive and focus of the course is built around relational and social justice leadership models, areas that are increasingly popular in current leadership development literature (Komives et al., 2006; Dugan 2006) and many offices in Miami’s Division of Student Affairs are no exception. But, the course is designed for students to explore their own leadership style and to learn from interactions, exposure, and reflection: “[the course seeks to] explore literature, practices, and problems in leadership and [help students] think more deliberately about how they might want to position themselves as a leader in the future (Knight Abowitz, Interview, 23 November 2009).
Assumptions

The following assumptions guide my thinking about undergraduates’ evolving understanding of leadership:

1) Leadership as a process is integral to student development and central to the mission of Miami University

The first guiding assumption of this study is that leadership is a process (Komives et al., 2006), one that is always adapting and evolving. Moreover, this idea provides for a view of leadership development as an ongoing and important level of student development (Kuh, 1995). As such, this study tracks students as they grow and learn about their own views of leadership and how theory intersects with practice and action. By utilizing a series of interviews, the practice of leadership as an always evolving process became a central theme in the rhetoric of participants. The role of leadership and its importance in student development is a key component of the Miami University mission (Hodge, 2008; Miami University, Office of the President, 2008). Because of this mandate and focus from the University mission (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006), student engagement is situated at the heart of the University’s strategic goals.

2) Learning about oneself is crucial in leadership development

The second assumption of this study is the idea that reflection and learning about oneself is crucial in student leadership development (Komives et al., 2006). One of the main components of the curriculum for the EDL 306 course is continual self-reflection through activities, writing, and discussion-based forums (Knight Abowitz, Interview, 23 November 2009; EDL 306 Syllabus). Such reflection permeates leadership literature and is commonplace in leadership-development courses at Miami (LeaderShape; Knight Abowitz et al., 2009; Roberts & Miami, 2004). At Miami, this importance placed
on reflection and self-understanding can be seen in the recently revamped Honors curriculum (Haynes & Taylor, 2008) or in Miami’s Leadership Commitment (Roberts & Miami, 2004).

3) Mixing curricular and co-curricular development enriches student development

As student development theory begins to influence academic thinking about leadership, universities are beginning to incorporate curricular and co-curricular experiences into a cohesive experience where learning extends beyond the classroom. One of the central tenets in the living, learning community system at Miami, this assumption is based on research that suggests that out-of-classroom experiences can reinforce and strengthen in-class learning (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Pike, 1999). Long a hallmark of a Miami University education, this principle has spread throughout the University community as Miami University President David Hodge calls for Miami to become the “engaged university,” one where curricular and co-curricular experiences mirror and reinforce learning in all aspects of student life and development (Hodge, 2008).

4) Social change/servant leadership models undergird current leadership education in CHANGE

Evaluating the theoretical section above, the main leadership model that continues to define Miami’s expectations and definition of leadership is the social change, relational model of leadership. This deference is evident when evaluating the curriculum and readings assigned for the course (Komives et al., 2007; Astin and Astin, 2000; see Appendix F) or when speaking with RAs and the FYAs about their driving curricular and co-curricular components, the ideas that inform their approach to creating community and developing leadership (Kouzes and Posner, 2003). The importance of this framework serves as the underlying assumption of this study, the success of which is still being assessed.
DEMOGRAPHY & STRUCTURE

The methodology of the study was to follow a group of randomly selected students and to document changes in their conceptualizations of and approaches of leadership during their first six months of college, a time where many students experience substantial growth and change. With an emphasis on tracking changes in thoughts about leadership and the role that living in the CHANGE community and/or taking the EDL 306 course played, these students were interviewed to create a narrative of their time as residents and participants in the Havighurst/CHANGE community.

Selection Process & Interviewed Populations

To solicit participants, I visited the initial EDL 306 course meetings and RA corridor meetings in Havighurst Hall. Participants were randomly selected from those who indicated an interest in participating in the study. In total, ten residents were selected to participate in the study, with six students participating in the EDL 306 course and four not enrolled in the course. This sample population included five men and five women of varying backgrounds and characteristics, including one international student.

Additional interviews were conducted with Brittany Garner, the First-Year Advisor (FYA) in Havighurst Hall5, two resident assistants (RAs) in the building, and Dr. Kathleen Knight Abowitz, the individual who spearheaded the revamping of the curriculum of the EDL course associated with the CHANGE community. These conversations were important because they provided insight into the creation of learning outcomes for the EDL 306 course. Additionally, conversations with the FYA and RAs in the residence hall allowed for useful dialogue about the intentionality of the non-curricular components of the CHANGE LLC. Besides intentional conversations and one-on-ones with residents

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5 Havighurst Hall is the location of the CHANGE LLC.
about leadership and their adjustment to Miami, RAs within the community were expected to plan programs for the residents of the CHANGE community. Additionally, RAs supported student engagement in organizations and helped supervise the hall’s community council. Consistent with the general theme of service found as crucial component of the CHANGE curriculum, RAs and FYAs also spend a good deal of time planning and leading students on service trips.

**Methodology**

This study is based on a qualitative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of the interviews conducted with each of the ten participants. While a quantitative analysis can be useful, my hope was to be able to build narratives to track students as they developed over their first five months in college. National data from surveys like the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership or from past Office of Residence Life surveys provide the University with data that shows basic satisfaction with residence hall experiences. Yet, I believe that the University could expand its measures of student learning in these programs, thus obtaining information about the extent to which the intention dimensions of these programs have an impact.

A qualitative analysis of the data from these interviews is interesting because it humanizes research subjects and allows the investigator to pinpoint certain activities that are meaningful to the development process—curricular, co-curricular, out-of-hall experiences, etc. By using techniques developed and practiced by academics in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Magolda and Ebben Gross, 2009), I gained insight on how to construct these conversations and to
analyze my results. The use of a qualitative-based methodology is an intentional way to help identify successful strategies for student leadership development and areas for improvement.

Approval

Throughout this study, a high priority has been placed on the anonymity of the students participating in the interviews, as well as the resident assistants who were interviewed. Such anonymity complies with the rules and regulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Miami’s guidelines for Human Subjects Research (Miami—IRB, 2008). Both the primary investigator and faculty advisor completed IRB training and had subsequent questions and additions approved by the Board before continuing research. After each set of interviews, the researchers were intentional about crafting questions that built off previous answers and levels of student development in order to insure that accurate narratives were constructed. Such questions had to be approved by IRB before use. Additionally, approval for study was granted by all participants, as well as by the Miami University Office of Residence Life, the Miami University Office of Student Activities & Leadership, the Miami University Honors and Scholars Program, and those parties in charge of hall and RA supervision and support.

Procedure

The study consisted of a series of four interviews each with ten residents in the CHANGE LLC and Havighurst Hall. Participants were engaged in four, 30-minute interviews during the course of fall semester 2009 and spring semester 2010 (see timeline in Appendix A for exact detail). These interviews started off with general questions and slowly built on information gleaned from previous rounds (see Appendix B, C, D, and E for the list of questions from each interview). Upon the conclusion of each interview, the researchers analyzed the data and strategically planned the next set of questions and
topics to be covered, allowing for flexibility in changing directions of the interviews. Questions loosely centered around the impact of EDL 306, co-curricular experiences inside and outside of the hall, and the role of conversation and reflection on the participants’ conceptualization of leadership. Participants were free to construct their own narratives and asked to reflect on important experiences and conversations.

**FINDINGS**

At the heart of this study is a desire to document the changes that occur in the thinking about leadership of ten participants in the Miami University CHANGE Living, Learning Community and to probe which dimensions of these students’ experiences—curricular and co-curricular, in-hall and out-of-hall—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment in EDL 306:</th>
<th>Degree of Change:</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Stable Student⁷</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modest Change⁸</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>1*</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
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*Indicates the presence of a data outlier.

⁶ With the exception of one student enrolled in the course, nine of ten students who participated in the study initially described their belief or relation to a hierarchical model of leadership.

⁷ “Stable Student” denotes those participants who maintained consistent views regarding leadership from the first interview to the fourth interview.

⁸ “Modest Change” students are individuals who noted some change in their self-awareness and understanding of leadership from their initial to final interviews, especially a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ideas discussed in the theoretical basis section.”
appeared to affect their thinking. Throughout the interview process, the investigators took note of common themes and trends among participants, with an emphasis on locating differences between students who enrolled in the EDL 306 course and those who did not. Additionally, many questions dealt with outside involvement and the environment and learning experiences created within the hall.

In order to make the data from these interviews easier to decipher, I have studied the interview responses of the participants and divided them into two groups (see Graph 1): those who reported little change in their beliefs about leadership during their first months of participation in the program (stable) and those who report modest to substantial change (“modest changers”). Participants were divided into “modest change” and “stable” groups. In each distinction, study participants are grouped by the change that they spoke about during interviews and the reflections in which they engaged about their own personal growth and understanding of leadership development. The graph above shows this breakdown among the 10 study participants with one student in the course exhibiting a stable understanding of leadership, while four demonstrated a modest degree of change. Additionally, three of the students who did not take the course exhibited stable beliefs of leadership, while only one spoke about moderate levels of personal growth and understanding of leadership development and self-understanding.

Two Examples

In order to better understand the distinction that was made between the two groups of students, the stable participants and the modest-changers, the following examples provide standards and serve as common examples of their representative groups:

Stable Students
Stable students tended to start with a basic understanding of hierarchical leadership, focusing on titles and positions of authority. At the conclusion of the fourth round of interviews, these participants often noted similar ideas in their beliefs about leadership. Moreover, these students did not mention learning much, if anything, about the leadership curriculum on which the CHANGE community is predicated. In fact, many of these interviewees spoke of the strengthening of views about leadership and certain traits of leadership, including being outspoken and/or forceful. This pattern is demonstrated by the two quotes that follow:

Interview #1

In any crowd (or any gathering of people), a leader helps his group take their idea... and helps them to move forward. He gives them a head start or a direction. And, I think what the leader should do [be] is something like a shepherd, someone who is in a position of authority over others. Someone to help [move the followers] forward.

Interview #4

I would say that my [views of leadership] haven’t changed much, because the focus [of the community] has been more-or-less on the same things that I have [already learned]. Taking personal initiative or responsibility to accomplish something that you want to accomplish and that other people are working with you to accomplish.

When this student moved into the CHANGE community, this student believed that a leader takes authority over others in order to move a group forward. At the end of the six months, he held to largely the same view: leaders take responsibility to accomplish objectives with a group.
Modest Change Students

Modest change students, like their stable counterparts, tended to start with basic conceptualizations of leadership that focused on a preference for and understanding of hierarchical and positional leadership. Unlike the stable participants, however, these individuals appear to be influenced by the underpinning theories that inform instruction and programming within the CHANGE LLC—accessible leadership, social change ideas, and an emphasis of knowing oneself through self-reflection and seeing oneself as a leader. The following quotes come from such a participant and demonstrate this transformation:

Interview #1

It is really difficult.... I still don’t know [how to define leadership]. In some sense, a leader can be the person with the best idea that everyone wants to follow. I think that there are levels of leadership, leaders that affect one person and leaders that affect millions of people. A leader can be someone who is good at influencing other people to think the way they think or to join their idea and to have them [back] them up.

Interview #4

I think that [my views] have done a 180 degree flip. From what I had seen in small-town Midwest as ‘this is leadership.’ [Leadership] is hierarchical...that was the way that I had always seen it, that’s how it was in high school. Then, I got here. I think that the course, and a lot of the people that I have met have completely changed my views because I have seen people who I thought would never be a leader, step up and be someone who had these fantastic viewpoints and these
wonderful methods of [accomplishing goals]. Some of these people have actually really

surprised me... I mean, I think that anyone can be a leader.

Stable Students

Stable students are those whose views of leadership and their role as a leader did not change or
who self-described their own change as negligible over the course of their four interviews. Three key
themes that came from discussions with these individuals were 1) low expectations about the impact of
living in the CHANGE LLC and of the course/leadership education; 2) adherence to traditional
hierarchical models of leadership and positional authority, and 3) little apparent recognition of how
curricular and co-curricular experiences can and do connect. These ideas permeated the interviews and
are quite telling in continuing the campus-wide discussion about student engagement and the role of
integrating curricular and co-curricular learning environments.

Low Expectations

Low expectations among students who displayed a relatively constant understanding of
leadership was one common theme among interviewees during the course of the four interviews. The
majority of these students, three of the four participants, were not enrolled in the course. Numerous
reasons for not enrolling in the course exist: course conflicts, disinterest, a lack of understanding about
the role and structure of the course in CHANGE community. One student’s testimonial best describes
many of the hesitations and notions about formalized educational structures in living, learning
communities:

I wanted to start taking more classes... I came in with 21 hours and [I] have almost the entire
Miami Plan done, so I just didn’t want to do it...it would have just slowed me down.
I didn’t want to sign up for any living, learning community that was going to make me take a class... the thing about leadership is, yes, it can be taught and that’s what a conference is about... but, I don’t feel like I need to take a course to be successful.

Many of these students mentioned that due to past leadership experiences, they were well prepared to take on leadership roles within the residence hall and across campus. Others expressed the fear that a “traditional leadership course” would only be a repeat of the numerous conferences that they had already attended.

One of the noticeable themes that emerges from the stable students is their low expectations about the impact of the course and the CHANGE community on their leadership development. Many doubted the value that formal leadership education could play on their development as students, often questioning the value of the course to the community. These same students dismissed the course as too similar to other leadership experiences that they had participated in. For students not in the course this idea became especially prevalent—very few saw the utility of having this course associated with the CHANGE LLC. The “been there, done that” attitude clouded the view of many of the interviewees, even the moderate changers enrolled in the course:

I didn’t really realize that I was taking it until I signed up for classes...I just thought it was just going to be another one of those leadership classes where we just sat there and played icebreakers, and all sang songs, and clapped our hands, and told each other that we love each other.
I thought that it was just gonna be bookwork... about different strategies; especially with our first assignment before class started... we had to read to chapters online. I thought it was going to be about analyzing different aspects of leadership and ways of leading people, what’s effective and what’s not. I wasn’t going in expecting to get anything huge out of it.

These feelings carried over to thoughts about community engagement and involvement in the CHANGE LLC. Many of the students had low expectations about what they would get from living in this specific living, learning community. Others discussed the thought of living with other leaders as “daunting” or “overwhelming.” However, none truly envisioned the living, learning community as a place where they would interact with other students and develop their leadership skills and traits:

I kinda ended up here by accident. I just thought that ‘I’m a leader, I will probably get along with other leaders’ and I thought that everyone would be outgoing... I mean, I didn’t really think much of it... I didn’t think it was going to be as nice as it’s been. Honestly, I thought I was just coming to a place to live and to sleep. I am still not sure what to expect here in the hall, but I cannot wait to get involved in organizations at Miami.

Adherence to Traditional Hierarchical Models of Leadership and Positional Authority

The second element that was noticeable across almost all interviewees during the initial interview was a preference for traditional, hierarchical structures of leadership. All participants mentioned holding leadership roles and the roles that leaders often play in group dynamics. However, the group of stable students didn’t really alter their fondness for hierarchical leadership. Nor did any of these individuals note a change in their thoughts about the role of leaders and how they relate to “followers:”
My views of leadership have not really changed since I first came to Miami. I guess, if I had to define leadership...and I sound like a broken record... but Leadership is being able to control a group and lead it to accomplishing its goal, that’s what a leader would do. Leadership is being a leader…it means that you are looked up to by people. I know that it is important to know about diversity, but I do not think that everyone can be a leader... I mean, I guess you can if you take classes or something.

Two of the students directly stated that leadership is difficult to learn—that some people are just born with ability to lead and others are not. They noted the importance that Miami was placing leadership development and student engagement, but these respondents questioned their ability to get involved in student organizations’ “leadership groups” as first-year students. This clear delineation between leaders and followers and the importance that individuals can place on a specified role becomes evident through these conversations.

Lack of Connections Made between Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences

The third theme that comes from the stable participant group is that they did not make reference to the importance of blending curricular and co-curricular experiences. These individuals have compartmentalized their studies and co-curricular activities as separate parts of their collegiate experience. Despite involvement in organizations that relate to their majors, many interviewees were quick to differentiate what they were learning in their classes and their outside activities. Even when asked about how major-related organizational engagement enhanced their in-class experiences and vice versa, these students did not really build solid connections.
I have noticed that a lot of my friend base does not live in Havighurst. I don’t know if I could say that the CHANGE LLC is how I found all of my friends... I don’t think that I could say that. Most of my involvement has come outside of the community... sitting on a leadership board for a [student] organization as a freshman has taught more about leadership than any of my interactions within the hall... looking back, I do not think that I have really separated what I have learned in the class[room] and out of it, well maybe I have... I mean, my biology class has very little to do with my engagement with [specific organization activity].

Again, this disconnect compartmentalizes aspects of students’ collegiate experiences that are intended to build off of each other. This idea is mentioned briefly in the theoretical section above, but is nonetheless important to discuss as it is an important goal of Miami University. These cohesive and complementary learning environments are laid out by Dr. Hodge (Hodge, 2008) and are featured prominently in the new University Honors Curriculum (Haynes & Taylor, 2008).

Modest Change Students

These individuals have reported modest or substantial levels of change in their understandings of leadership through the duration of the six month study. These individual also advanced in their knowledge and understanding of the ideas and concepts put forward in the theoretical basis section, ideas like the connection between curricular and co-curricular experiences and the importance of living, learning communities on student development. Additionally, these students exhibited an understanding of an affinity with many of the theoretical leadership models that served as a basis for the EDL 306 course and the CHANGE LLC—the relational and social change models of leadership, beliefs about the accessibility of leadership, and the importance of reflection.
Among these students who are designated as achieving a modest level of change, there are three themes central to the importance of the study: 1) seeing leadership as accessible to all and valuing diversity of opinion and belief; 2) viewing the co-curricular activities, both in and out of the hall, as complimentary to formal curricular studies; 3) reflecting and building upon theory and past leadership experiences.

Students who exhibited modest change listed numerous factors for the decision to participate in the EDL 306 course or to join the community. Overwhelmingly, though, many students signed up for the class with skepticism and insecurity. While committed and excited about the opportunity to take the course, doubts about “learning leadership” still remained. These students mentioned a desire to learn more about leadership or a chance to connect with other students in the hall as the primary reasons for signing up for EDL 306. Additionally, some of these modest change students were influenced and encouraged by academic advisors to explore this aspect of the CHANGE LLC.

Seeing Leadership as Accessible to All and the Value of Diversity

The first theme that was common among the interviewees in the modest change group was the idea that all persons are capable of engaging in leadership activities and becoming leaders. Many students spoke of their initial beliefs that leaders belong to an exclusive group, that leadership was the purview of the few. Moreover, these individuals discussed traits that leaders possessed—charisma, time-management skills, dependability, etc. What I found particularly notable about these discussions was that they focused on leaders in the singular sense; that positions were filled by one leader and that there could only be one leader at a time. During the fourth interview, many participants mentioned a noticeable change within themselves and they ways in which they looked at who could be a leader:
I think that my [beliefs about leadership] have done a 180 degree flip. From what I have seen in [my small Midwestern town] that leadership is a hierarchical thing... you work your way down the pyramid. That’s the way that I had always seen it... it was like that in high school and in middle school...it was very totem poled, tiered... and then I got here—and I especially think that the course and a lot of people that I have met have completely changed my views, because I have seen people who I did not think would ever be a leader step up and be someone who has these fantastic viewpoints and these wonderful methods... it has actually really surprised me.

Additionally, these participants talked about the importance of diversity and the need to learn how to work with diverse groups in order to improve their leadership development. For many students, they mentioned some of the activities and discussions in EDL 306 and in their corridors as eye-opening and important. Even students who identify as a member of an underrepresented group discussed the power of these open discussions on their own beliefs of differences. As one of the stated goals and outcomes for the course, the understanding of diversity and it importance for leadership development became increasing evident as I spoke with these students:

We have spent a lot of time on diversity...it’s an interesting class because we all come from different places... and I know that I make a lot of assumptions [based on physical appearance]... I think that I just need to stop stereotyping. These things that I am learning, realizing that we are all so different, will only help me as a leader in the future.

Drawing Upon Connections between the Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

The second theme that was consistent among the “high change” group was the relationship that these individuals were able to recognize between co-curricular and curricular experiences. Numerous
interviewees mentioned being able to connect and use some of the leadership strategies from the EDL 306 course in group projects or in student organization meetings. Another “high change” participant mentioned looking at his friends through this same lens. The connection between the course, the in-hall programming, and participation in student activities allowed many students to have different aspects of their lives at Miami connect in meaningful ways. Again, this idea is consistent with many of the theoretical bases discussed earlier and has gained traction with the administration and student affairs professionals across the University.

*My co-curricular activities have really built upon what we have covered in the course... I have seen that leadership doesn’t come in one specific style... for me, I don’t think that I am necessarily the type of person that just stands up in front of everyone, but I think that I am the type of [leader] that is aware of those around me... something that I would have never considered myself before the course... it really does take all types to be a leader.*

*It’s been great for me to look at [student organization] and to see some of the leadership concepts that we talk about in class. This [practical] spin allows me to connect my own actions to the people I look up to, to learn from them, and connect it back to models from class.*

What is particularly notable about these individuals’ responses are that the connections made are circular, from the course to activities and back to the course again. Education is seen as a fluid endeavor. Some participants discussed how seeing theory in practice inspired them to make changes within their own leadership style. Moreover, building such patterns and holistic approaches to learning can have a large impact on other areas of knowing, thus affecting not just leadership development but other areas of student development.
The Importance of Reflection

The value of reflection and building on theory and past leadership experiences was the third theme that was evident among the “high change” group. Students noted that the emphasis placed on reflection helped them understand themselves as leaders and improve both strengths and weaknesses. Intentional reflection through class activities, written assignments, and open discussions create venues for these students to reflect on past knowledge and experiences with leadership. One such reflection session caused this participant to truly critically analyze on the leaders around him and how these experiences inform his own ideas on leadership:

My participation in the course [and in this study] has made me think a lot more about leadership. Before each [class session], it forces me to think about what I have done to be a leader, what have I seed other leaders do? What is my definition of leadership...have I seen others do this? I really actually think about what I actually think...

Such an emphasis on meaningful reflection has become quite commonplace in higher education literature by situating each student at the center of his or her own learning (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Again, by allowing students to interpret information in ways that are salient to them, they are allowed to have some semblance of self-ownership. Participants can interpret their own educational path. Asking students to connect past leadership exposure to relevant curricular experiences through reflection creates a complimentary relationship that benefits the student’s understanding of leadership development.
Throughout the study, two individuals stood out from the rest—one student who was not in the course but experienced a significant degree of growth in her conceptualizations of leadership and another who demonstrated an elevated understanding of leadership from the beginning of the first round of interviews. This first individual did not enroll in the course, nor was she active in the hall. Preferring to spend the majority of her time with student organizations, she mentioned finding extraordinary leaders and learning from her experiences watching them in action. Being exposed to multiple models of leadership coupled with the chance to reflect on her experiences through her participation in this study, this student met many of the learning outcomes and goals expressed in the methodology section—similar to those who had experienced high-levels of change after participating in the EDL 306 course. It appears that the information which was designed to reach the students in CHANGE via curriculum was replaced by participation and reflection due to co-curricular activities.

Another student in the study did not fit easily into the stable student/modest change categorization. This student entered the study with a particular advanced understanding of leadership, largely built on an understanding developed as part of the student’s religious faith. The student described, in detail, many of the main components of the servant leadership model of leadership (Greenleaf, 2003), detailing how his faith drove him to be a “servant of God towards others in every aspect of [his] life.” From the first interview until the last, his views remained consistent, and if anything deepened. Because the servant model of leadership can be viewed as an advanced understanding of leadership, with deference towards inclusive and social change rhetoric, the case of this student appeared to be an outlier of the study. His advanced thinking and conceptualizations of leadership do not allow him to be easily placed on the table above.
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

From the data presented above, two interesting points emerge that warrant further discussion. The first comment about my findings is that there is a need to provide students with enough information about living, learning communities and their unique spaces that they create to allow them to make informed decisions—low expectations about these experiences are an unnecessary evil. The second point that comes from these findings is the necessity of a formalized, intentional structure that allows students to reach and engage with leadership development in personalized methods.

Too often in discussions of student affairs and the evaluation of programs do professionals fail to acknowledge points and facts that seem obvious. Yet, the findings of this study suggest that it is occasionally necessary to start with the basics and to build upon these ideas. When creating a community, it is vital that students understand their roles as members and that they connect with the central ideals of a living, learning community. As evident by many of the quotes featured in the findings section, students often have exceedingly low expectations about their selected LLCs. Such low expectations prevent student buy-in as well as hinder the participation and motivation to get involved.

It is crucial that students understand the potential transformative nature of these experiences and that a desire to become involved—and to change—become the norm. Increasing the predilection of students towards transformative experiences becomes vital. Education about the value of living, learning communities begins early in the college search and acceptance process. Miami should be proud of its already-successful system and situate these communities as hallmark and seminal pieces of the “Miami Experience.” Again, this outreach begins early and must continue throughout students’ experiences and time in the LLC. This idea, often referred to as anticipatory socialization, suggests
Miami needs to be more intentional in acclimating incoming students to the core experiences of their LLCs.

The second discussion topic that is the need for some form of intentional structure that helps student access the learning outcomes, while meeting students where they are at in their journey of understanding leadership. Consistent with the learning partnerships model (Baxter Magolda, 2004), this idea would create an accessible model where students can engage in their own methods to understand leadership. While many students were able to access the ideas of leadership as a pluralistic process geared towards social change and relational models of leadership through engagement in the EDL 306 course, many students did not have the same opportunity to connect in such a way.

Despite the lack of course openings for all interested students, it becomes necessary to find alternative methods to help students locate areas in which they can engage with and learn from similar methods. The student mentioned in the findings section who underwent a transformation about leadership because of her participation with student organizations in an important example. This individual was exposed to differing forms of leadership and to other central issues of leadership through these opportunities. This “secondary path” to leadership development raises an interesting point of discussion: how can shareholders and student affairs professionals create an intentional structure in which students are able to engage with Miami’s selected leadership narratives on their own terms?

Limitations

Throughout this study, numerous limitations about methodology and results have become evident. The knowledge of such limits provides the opportunity to locate concepts and topics that
require further research or areas where more data is necessary to reach conclusions. One such limitation in this study is the relatively low number of participants. Because of this small number, the study is limited in its ability to generalize about the students of the CHANGE community, but is still able to draw out key factors and themes. Another limitation is the self-selection process which students undertake to become a part of the community. Unlike other institutions that utilize the living, learning community concept, Miami has made the selection of an LLC mandatory for first-year students. As such, the possibility for outliers and students who do not participate in the community increases, reducing student buy-in and influencing the actions and composition of Havighurst Hall. Finally, due to the relatively small number of participants, it is difficult to discern if the “interview affect” had much of an impact on the change in leadership conceptualizations of the participants. Further study would help to identify additional patterns and to explore the frequency of outliers and the themes presented in the finding section.

COMMENTARY

Throughout the study, there have been certain aspects of the CHANGE LLC that have played a large role in the leadership development of the participating students. Yet, as I analyze these major components, it is important to identify areas that need improvement and other aspects that can be duplicated and used to enhance student learning in other living, learning communities across campus. This section, while maintaining a nominal connection with the results of the study, stems more from my own experiences with leadership development at Miami. Such a commentary extends the conclusions above and adds a new layer—an area of analysis and suggestions that come from first-hand experience.

One area of strength is the clear benefit of participating in a course associated with the academic community. Another area of focus would be work to create a common plan and definition for
leadership education at Miami. These two recommendations in conjunction would only help to strengthen the current living, learning structure of Miami’s residence hall communities and ground Miami’s already strong commitment to the leadership development of all students at the University.

The first recommendation is to extend the curricular dimensions of residence hall living. As alluded to by the data collected above, this element contributes in highly substantive ways to the development of student-leaders. These courses provide students with an opportunity to learn about the theory behind the practice, while providing them with opportunities for personal reflection in the form of written assignments and group discussions. Such reflection is crucial to student growth, and each interviewee mentioned the importance of this component in the final interview. Creating these intentional spaces and allowing students to have their curricular experiences directly connect with their co-curricular experiences can prove to be truly transformative (Kuh, 2005; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). This model can be adapted to other LLCs across campus, an idea that would only strengthen these curricular—co-curricular experiences across campus.

Additionally, I believe that it is important to increase the number of students who take these courses in each residence hall and to demonstrate the value in enrolling in the course. The impact of such curricular experiences will be felt when they expose more students in each community to these experiences, not just a small percentage of the total population (Havighurst—64 students out of 297-310, dependent on housing openings). Many of the students who were not enrolled in the course mentioned that they had heard relatively little about what the curriculum or what was learned outside of the occasional assignment. Larger numbers of students enrolled would only help to increase impact of the lessons learned and the reflections made in class.
The second recommendation would is to integrate the leadership curriculum into a larger framework of leadership education at Miami. As it stands, there are disparate locations that teach leadership at Miami—the Cliff Alexander Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and Leadership, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, the Wilks Institute, the Office of Residence Life, the Office of Community Service and Engagement, the Buck Rodgers Institute, just to name a few. Unfortunately, these programs all approach leadership through different lenses and there is no real cohesion across disciplines. Moreover, this lack of cohesion prevents students from stepping between leadership development tracks and from gaining a solid path, starting with their first-year and advancing through to senior year. If Miami seeks to make its students into leaders who are ready to tackle the growing challenges of the world, such an intentionally-designed structure is crucial.

Another result of this decentralization is the lack of a unified definition of leadership to which all programs can loosely base their instruction. The social change and relational models of leadership directly inform the curriculum used in the EDL 306 course (Knight Abowitz, Interview, 23 November 2009) and that help guide RA and staff interaction within the residence hall (RAs, Interviews, 1 & 2 February 2010; Garner, Interview, 2 February 2010). Yet, other groups adhere more to other commonly accepted forms of leadership education and theory. Since the establishment of the Miami Leadership Commitment’s goals in the early 2000s, little has been done institutionally to build bridges and networks across curriculum and programs. The creation of such a unified definition appears to be the next step for these programs to undergo—it is vital for students, and even for employers and parents, to gain a true understanding of what leadership means to Miami and that these learning objectives and end goals are clearly put forward and upheld across the University.
REFERENCES


Magolda, Peter and Kelsey Ebben Gross. It’s all about Jesus! Faith as an oppositional collegiate subculture.” Sterling, VA, USA: Stylus.


Appendix A:

Time Line:

Receive IRB Approval- 4th Week
Ask for participation, email interested students- 4th Week
Interviews Round 1- 5th Week
Interviews with curriculum creator- 8th Week
Interviews Round 2- 10th Week
Interviews Round 3- 15th Week
Interviews Round 4- 1st Week, Spring Semester
Interviews with First Year Advisor, RAs, and a course instructor- 3th Week, Spring Semester
Appendix B:
Participant Interviews #1

1) Name, Major, Hometown

2) What are your future career and personal aspirations?

3) What have been your experiences with leadership in the past?

4) Describe if you chose to take leadership roles before your time at Miami?
   a. If yes, what were they and why?
   b. If no, did you want to get involved? What limited you?

5) If you are participating in the EDL class, what are your expectations of the class? What do you expect/want to learn?

6) What are your expectations of the CHANGE LLC—programming, community building, etc?

7) In regard to leadership, what are your expectations of clubs, organizations, and academic opportunities?

8) Can you describe the traits that you believe are important for a leader to possess?

9) Can you define leadership?

10) What does leadership mean to you?
   a. What experiences helped inform your beliefs about leadership?

*Please note that the questions above are general themes for the interview session. The principle investigators retain the right to modify or ask follow-up questions from participants to have them delve more into topics or themes that present themselves. However, questions will not stray beyond these topics covered above.
Appendix C:
2nd Set of Interviews: Guiding Questions

Themes:
1) Living in Havighurst so far
2) Classroom environment/EDL class
3) Activities and organizations

1) When you first came to college, you had ideas about your interactions with other members of the community. Have they been different than you thought they would be?

2) Have you attended any programs offered by RAs or your community council? If so, what were they? Did you learn anything? Was there a focus on leadership? If so, did it provide you with any insights?

3) When you hang out in the residence hall, what do talk about? Given that leadership is the focus of this hall, has this been a topic of conversation?

4) What components of this information have been relevant/struck a chord with you? Why? Can you adapt these lessons outside the classroom? What are some of your strategies to do this?

5) What have been some of the topics that you have covered in EDL? What projects or activities have been associated with these activities?

6) When you started EDL 306, you had a certain idea of what that class would look like. How do these ideas match with your experiences thus far?

7) Generally, first-year students describe changes in their ideas about college in their first semester—how do your experiences compare with these ideas about college?

8) If someone were to come and observe your behavior in class—EDL 306 or other—, what would they say about your role and participation (How would your friends describe you in this class)? What have you learned from these roles? Can you incorporate these ideas back to your co-curricular/personal life?

9) What sorts of things have you been involved with since you stated school?

10) What role do you play in these groups? Have you learned anything from these roles/organizations?

11) How have your views of leadership changed since you came to Miami? How did you learn this lesson? Where/with whom did this take place?
Appendix D:
Interview Questions Round #3

Themes to be explored:
1) Adjustment to College?
2) EDL 306 & Insights; Experiences in Havighurst
3) Experiences of Activities: Other Leaders
4) What is leadership at Miami? As an institution, what does Miami value?

The following questions deal with adjustment to college?

1) How do you think you have adjusted to college? What has been difficult? What has been easy?

2) Describe your first semester at Miami. Any personal successes? What have you learned about yourself?

3) What have you done in your free time? Outside of classes? Outside of Havighurst?

4) How have your classes challenged you? What have you learned in this new learning environment?

The following questions cover EDL 306 and students’ experiences in Havighurst.

5) What are you covering in EDL 306? What have you read? What projects or activities have been associated with these topics?

6) What topics have impacted your view of leadership? In your opinion, what kind of leadership does this course focus on?

7) What kinds of programs have been offered in hall? Have you gone? Did you participate in the Service Week? What have these programs taught you about leadership?

8) Describe your interactions with other students and your involvement in the hall. What kind of leadership do you see others in the hall exhibit?
The following questions cover students’ experiences in other activities and their observations of other leaders.

9) What clubs and organizations have you gotten involved with/hope to get involved with?

10) What role(s) have you had in these organizations? What has these roles shown you about your own leadership style?

11) Who have you identified as leaders in your hall? In your classes? In your activities? On campus? What sets these individuals apart from their peers? What have you learned from them?

The following questions cover leadership resources, Miami’s definition of leadership, and students’ views of their own leadership capacity.

12) What resources/offices on campus that deal with leadership do you know about? What do these groups do/how do they help students learn about leadership?

13) From your experiences at Miami, how do you think that university describes leadership? What traits does Miami value?

14) What is your leadership style? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

15) How do you define leadership? How have your views of leadership changed since you came to Miami? How do you account for this change? Where did it come from?
Appendix E:
Interview Questions Round #4

Themes to be explored:
5) Reflection on first semester—EDL 306; Class; Activities; Friends
6) Relationships back at home? Family Friends? Experiences at other schools? Insights?
7) Future at Miami & Beyond? Role of Leadership? Lessons learned?
8) What is leadership at Miami? Improvements? What is leadership to you?

The following questions ask participants to reflect on their first semester?

16) Now that you have had the chance to step away from Miami for a few weeks, how was your first semester? Adjustment to college life? Do you enjoy it?

17) More specifically, can you reflect on how your classes went last semester? Activities? Living in Havighurst Hall?

18) EDL 306: Did you find the class helpful? What were the most useful aspects? Least helpful? What would you change if you could fix anything about the course? Would you recommend the class to others?

19) Do you think that you are fitting in at Miami? Do you think that living in CHANGE helped you fit in, make friends, etc.?

The following questions cover the transition from high school and college and difficulties.

20) Going back home over break, describe your relationships with friends and family members?

21) How do your experiences—curricular, co-curricular, friends, community, etc.—compare with friends at different schools?

22) Did you mention your experiences in EDL 306/Havighurst Hall/with leadership? Have your friends had similar experiences with leadership development?

23) From these conversations, did you learn anything that you could bring back to Miami? Comparing both experiences, what does Miami do well? What could it improve upon?
The following questions ask participants to look towards their future and the role of leadership.

24) What do you want to do with the rest of your time at Miami? After Miami?

25) What role do you see leadership playing in your future? (Career, education goals, etc.)

26) What have you learned from your time in the CHANGE community or EDL 306 that will stick with you as you move forward?

The following questions ask students to reflect on leadership education at Miami and their own definitions of leadership.

27) How would you describe your experiences with leadership (education) so far at Miami? What did you like? What could be improved?

28) Due to Miami’s focus on undergraduate education, how does extensive leadership education—roles, opportunities, experiences—contribute to this goal in your opinion?

29) What has been the benefit of this study on your own thoughts about leadership?

30) How do you define leadership? How have your views of leadership changed since you came to Miami? How do you account for this change? Where did it come from?
EDL 306: The Nature of Group Leadership

Fall 2009 Syllabus

Catalogue description:
A two-credit course for first or second year students interested in exploring multiple approaches to leadership and building capacity for socially responsible leadership. The course involves engaged learning through community action work, skill building, reading, writing, case analysis, and dialogue.

Student learning objectives:

- Examine and compare multiple approaches to leadership with a focus on leadership for social responsibility
- Understand personal leadership capacities, as well as recognize and critique individual effectiveness in leadership, through readings, exercises, and case analysis work
- Explore the ethical concepts and strategies for socially responsible leadership work
- Learn about community leadership through a community action project designed to link student initiative with community problems or needs
- Build skills relevant to leadership work, including self-assessment, dialogue and listening, critical thinking, team- and coalition-building.

Purposes and guiding assumptions:

This course is guided by several key assumptions about leadership, how students learn, and how to best create an optimal environment for both students and instructors to learn together.

The purpose of the course is to help students think critically about what leadership means both for themselves and in the world; to test their assumptions about what it means to lead others; to help them see and compare various perspectives on leadership; and to help them explore the ethical issues at the heart of leadership work. It is a course oriented to both critical examination of leadership as well as helping build skills and strategies for future leadership work.
We believe that students learn through the co-construction of knowledge, a process that involves teachers and students working together to inquire, test assumptions, build new knowledge, and learn from the trial and error of real experiences. We envision each class as a learning partnership, where both student and instructor share knowledge to learn more about leadership concepts and the development of self as leader. The class will start with some facilitation by the instructors, but as the semester progresses students will take more of a responsibility to co-construct discussions. Students and instructors will actively participate in constructing a learning environment.

Finally, we strive to build a classroom environment where a “moral conversation” can take place each time we meet and do our collective work. Robert Nash (2007) talks about a moral conversation as a space in which people listen carefully and respectfully, tolerate and work through conflict with patience, and bring a willingness to change their minds if evidence suggests it to be necessary. The moral conversation is an ideal that can help us think about how we can talk to each other, listen to each other, and learn from one another as diverse human beings with a varied set of experiences, belief systems, and backgrounds.

**Required Readings:**

All readings listed in the syllabus will be available through E-Reserves or Blackboard.

**Assessment and Evaluation:**

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**Course Requirements:**

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Assignment #1

*Defining Leadership Exercise* *Due September 16*

Assignment #2

*“My Story”: Leadership Autobiography* *Due October 21*

Assignment #3

*Case Study Analysis* *Due December 2*

Assignment #4

*Final Paper* *Due Exam Week*

Participation & blogs are ongoing course commitments and requirements.

1. **Participation: in class and on-line (20%)** – Throughout the semester, you will need to participate in a class discussion board or blog made available to you by your Instructors through Blackboard or some other tool. The instructor will provide various prompts on Blackboard to stimulate your thinking on a topic, and Instructors will grade your participation both in class and online on the quality of critical thinking, questions, and application of the ideas in your class readings and discussions. Students receiving full credit for participation in this course will 1) come to each class prepared to discuss assigned readings; 2) post twice weekly on the course blog or discussion board, making an honest and substantive effort to engage your peers and the class concepts and readings in on-line conversation.

2. **Defining Leadership Exercise (15%): Due September 16**
   Compare and contrast 2 perspectives on leadership discussed in Unit 1 of the course. Present this analysis in either a 1) 2-page, double-spaced paper, or a 2) visual representation of your choice. Regardless of the way you present your analysis, you should demonstrate a clear understanding of each perspective, be able to show how they are similar to and different from one another, and how each perspective would result in a different real-life approach to leadership.
3. “My Story”: Leadership Autobiography (20%): Due October 21

You have had different experiences throughout your life that have shaped the person that you are today. Your “leadership autobiography” encompasses the development of your understanding of leadership to date, through self-reflection and Units 1 and 2 of this class. You should thoroughly explore the experiences, relationships, and factors that have influenced your understanding of leadership throughout your life.

Questions to consider when creating your Leadership Autobiography:

1. Who or what specific experiences have shaped your philosophy of leadership positively, negatively, or both?
2. What is your ideal image of a leader(s)? Be specific (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.) How have issues of privilege shaped your perception or ideal image of a leader(s)?
3. What does leadership look like in a diverse setting?
4. Explain the role that a mentor or role model has played in your life
   a. If your mentor has represented diversity (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc), cite these differences. Explain how these differences may/may not have affected the relationship. What did you learn from this experience?
   b. If your mentor or role model has not represented diversity (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc), would you be willing to be mentored by someone who represents diversity? Why or why not?

Within this autobiography, you must include:

1. Your current understanding of leadership;
2. A description and analysis of one or two life experiences (grade school, high school, community involvement, family, friends, mentors, etc.) have shaped your understanding of leadership;
3. An analysis of your leadership assessment results related to your own leadership style (i.e., how your assessment results help you understand your own style or role in leadership);
4. How your leadership story is shaped by your cultural identity(ies); and
5. How your understanding of leadership compares/contrasts to existing leadership theories studied in class.

Minimally cite 2 leadership theories/concepts studied in class. Be sure to define clearly each studied leadership theory before comparing/contrasting the theory to your personal understanding of leadership. The autobiography should be roughly five pages or so in length; however, feel free to use your creativity to further explore your own leadership experiences (e.g., express your ideas
through a poem, creative work of art, collage, etc). You are encouraged to discuss any ideas about this project with your instructor before the deadline. Be prepared to share your insights with your class.

4. **Case Study Analysis – (20%): Due December 2**

The purpose of written case study analysis is for you to explore options, alternative viewpoints, and reveal the tensions of leadership. This assignment is designed for you to share and gather information from various sources (peers, course readings, and personal reflection) in an effort to evaluate different perspectives of the case, discuss dynamics of the case, incorporate leadership concepts from class, and use the varying perspectives in the written analysis of the case. This assignment has a group and individual component.

*Instructions:* Write a case study (based on an ethical dilemma/leadership experience) based on a situation that you have encountered while being a leader or partaking in a leadership activity. This situation/experience can be a past or present experience. You are to revisit the situation. Take notes of specific details that are/have caused the tension in the leadership situation. **Think about the following:** What are the facts? What are the ethical implications/dilemmas? What are the implications for leadership? How did this situation affect others involved? Looking back, what would you change and why?

**Format of the Written Case Study Analysis Assignment:**

1. Submit a draft of your case to your instructor before you begin your paper.
2. Paper should have the following components:
   a. Facts/details about the case.
   b. Ethical dilemmas, issues, or concerns.
      i. Present both sides of case if possible. May provide clarity when considering implications for leadership or alternative courses of action
   c. Implications for leadership
      i. Would you apply specific model(s) of leadership? What are the consequences of using these specific models?
      ii. What would you do differently? If you are/were not the leader in the situation, what should he or she have done differently?
      iii. What course of action did you decide? Defend your selection.
   d. Conclusion
i. Would you change your decision after revisiting the situation? In what way?
ii. Has this assignment challenged your personal code of ethics? If so, in what way?
iii. What did you take from this case study?
iv. What did you learn about yourself when gathering different perspectives? What was your response?
v. How will this impact your future decisions as a leader?

5. Final Paper: Towards a Philosophy of Leadership (25%): Due Exam Week

The goal of this paper is for you to take what you’ve learned in this course and what you know of yourself to create an initial philosophy and purpose for your leadership. It is designed to 1) integrate your study of leadership across the 3 units of the semester; 2) assess your understanding of the content of those 3 units; and 3) encourage you to use your new knowledge to form a plan for your leadership work in the future. There are two required parts of this assignment:

Part 1: Integrating self, other, and community in leadership work

• Describe and assess the various perspectives on leadership that you learned about in Unit 1. Compare several of the definitions or concepts of leadership that were presented and discussed in that Unit, and through that analysis, provide a definition of leadership that you think best guides you as you move forward in your own leadership work.
• Describe and assess your progress on your self-understanding and introspection as a leader; what strengths do you possess, and what are your areas of growth? How does your cultural position (as understood through any/all of the following: your race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) impact your orientation and work as a leader?
• Describe and assess the notion of leadership for social responsibility as we have studied this over the semester and particularly in Unit 3 of the class; what does it mean to lead for this purpose? In your conclusion to part 1, describe how the three units of the course enable you to better understand what it will mean for you take up “leadership for social responsibility” in community and public life.

To successfully complete this part of the paper, you must reference at least ten course readings or class activities in a substantive and meaningful manner.

Part 2: Your Personal Leadership Development Plan

This part of the final paper is a continuation and application of part 1. Now that you have spent some time thinking about your understandings of leadership, this is your opportunity to put those
ideas into action. The goal of this assignment is to help you “begin with the end in mind.” In writing this portion, consider:

- What do you care about? What causes and issues are important to you?
- What is your vision for a better world and what could the future look like if you work towards a cause (in the community or globally) that is important to you?
- What are some essential commitments and concrete action steps that you can make as you pursue this vision in the future?
- What challenges do you foresee in striving to achieve these commitments? How will you address these?
- Describe a vision you have for who you will become and the expectations you have as you seek to provide leadership in the future – at Miami and beyond.

Class Policies:

Being prepared for every class: Reading and preparation for each class session are essential to the success of the class. It is important that each individual come to class prepared to contribute to the discussion. This will only enhance what you gain from your experience. If necessary, instructors may give quizzes and active reading guides to gauge students’ understanding of the material. Most reading is provided ahead of time; however, instructors may also provide additional reading for specific topics throughout the semester.

Respectful class participation: Please silence your cell phone and refrain from texting during class time. Please do not use a laptop computer in class unless you a) can refrain from using the Internet for email or other distractions during class and b) get permission from the instructor before-hand.

Class Attendance: Because EDL 306 is a discussion-based course, it is vital that students regularly attend class. Instructors will allow two excused absences. Sickness and personal/family emergencies are examples of an excused absence. If an emergency arises, instructors will allow more than two excused absences with a note from a medical professional, counselor, or parent/guardian. Instructors reserve the right to lower a student’s final course grade due to excessive unexcused absences.

Academic Honesty: Students are assumed to fulfill all course requirements in compliance with the Miami University statement of Academic Misconduct. Any violation of this statement will lead to an official report and investigation of the charges alleged. Academic integrity is an ultimate value at Miami University and all students, faculty, and staff are responsible to see that academic integrity is protected.
An Important Statement about Plagiarism: Using someone else's ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as our own, either on purpose or through carelessness, is a serious offense known as plagiarism. "Ideas or phrasing" includes written or spoken material, of course — from whole papers and paragraphs to sentences, and, indeed, phrases — but it also includes statistics, lab results, art work, etc. "Someone else" can mean a professional source, such as a published writer or critic in a book, magazine, encyclopedia, or journal; an electronic resource such as material we discover on the World Wide Web; another student at our school or anywhere else; a paper-writing "service" (online or otherwise) which offers to sell written papers for a fee. For more detailed information about plagiarism, please visit: http://webster.commnet.edu/mla/plagiarism.shtml.

MLA Format: All papers for this course should be double-spaced and written in 12-point font with 1” page margins. When referring to an author or source, it is critical that you cite each source that you use. MLA format is acceptable. For more information about MLA, please visit: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html#General.

A Note on Late Papers: Part of being a responsible EDL 306 student is to submit papers on time at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Instructors will dock one letter grade (10%) off for each day the paper is late. For instance, if the paper is due on Monday and the students wait to turn it in the next class (Wednesday), instructors will dock 20% off the paper because it will be two days late. If an emergency occurs (severe sickness, family emergency, etc.) the student will need to notify the instructors before the paper is due to work out a special arrangement.

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<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<td>Scope and purpose: Provide a variety of definitions</td>
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**Week 1**

Week 1 and introductory readings on leadership to spur initial investigations as to the nature of leadership, working towards a definition or collection of definitions that help set the stage for the rest of the class inquiry into leadership. Provide a brief overview of leadership theory, past, present and future. Develop skills of dialogue and team building among class participants. Begin planning for community action projects by discussing student interest.

**Week 2**

**Perspectives on Leadership: Relational and Adaptive Models**


**Week 3**

**Perspectives on Leadership: Transformative and Social Change Models**


- Keith Grint, “What is leadership: Person, result, position or process?” chapter 1 from *Leadership: Limits and Possibilities* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 5-32.
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Unit 2: Exploring Self in Leadership</td>
<td>Strengths Quest exercise due</td>
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<td>Scope and purpose: Provide learning experiences to promote, and promote the importance of introspection and self awareness as a key foundation for leadership work. Investigations of emotional intelligence as it relates to leadership work and the spiritual dimensions of leadership featured. Build on self-discovery by understanding the complicated nature of interpersonal communication and collaboration with diverse others. Provide forums to learn about leadership issues related to cultural diversity, communication, conflict, and coalition-building. Plan and execute the community action project.</td>
<td>“Defining leadership” assignment due</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Exploring Self in Leadership</td>
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Self in Collaboration with Others</th>
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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Community Action Project &amp; Reflection</th>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Unit 3: Leadership and Social Responsibility</th>
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<td><strong>Autobiography assignment due</strong></td>
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<td><em>(Reflection and sharing in class)</em></td>
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<td>- Will Keim, “On Becoming an Ethical Leader,” chapter 9 in <em>Let your leadership speak: How to lead and be heard</em> (Paxton, MA: The Future is Yours to Create!, 2002), pp. 103-112.</td>
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**Scope and purpose:** Investigations on the social responsibilities of leadership with regards to communities, and larger public contexts. Examining principles of mutuality and reciprocity, integrity, shared power, and inclusiveness. Using the community action project to reflect on the importance and challenges of leading using these principles. Working on case analysis to highlight these principles and their potential use in real-life leadership contexts.
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Case Work</td>
<td><em>Case Analysis Paper Due</em></td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Evaluations &amp; Workshop on Final Paper</td>
<td>Final paper due during scheduled exam time of University Exam week.</td>
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