



NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP SERIES REVIEW

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This review aims to introduce the New Directions for Student Leadership series and to offer insight on how the content in the series may be useful to campus activities professionals.

In today's globally connected world, there is a need for inclusive, innovative, and informed leaders. Transforming leaders such as these are essential for initiating and realizing organizational and societal change (Astin & Astin, 2000; Burns, 1978; Dugan, 2017). "The call to action ... is that postsecondary leadership learning environments are materially important to the development of upcoming generations of societal leaders" (Chunoo & Osteen, 2015, p. 17). Through their daily observation of student learning and development and the delivery of services that improve the student experience, campus activities professionals (McCullar, Peck, DeSawal, Rosch, & Krebs, 2020, p. 6), are on the front line in the realm of developing students into these much-needed leaders.

Much of the leadership literature focuses on either a currently popular approach or scholarly research. Books designed to reach a wider audience often take a basic, simplified approach, utilizing a story or metaphor to aid the reader in applying the concepts to practice. At the other end of the literature continuum is research on leadership conducted in many organizational settings - business, non-profit, and education - but with less scholarship focused on youth and college students. While research findings offer implications for application, depending on the specific focus of the study as well as the context and participants, it can be a challenge for professionals to conceptualize application to practice. Recently there has been a renewed interest in college student leadership education and development. While there are numerous areas on a college campus where this learning and development may happen, such as classrooms, residence halls, or campus events and speakers, campus activities professionals are often at the forefront of developing such experiences. To prepare students to be the leaders campuses and society needs today and in the future, campus activities professionals (CAPs) must put intentionally designed, evidence-based concepts into practice. This review aims to introduce campus activities professionals to the critical insights on scholarship and application explicitly focused on the leadership development of youth and college students offered by the *New Directions for Student Leadership* (NDSL) series.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Conceptually, we understand that leadership can emerge from anywhere and is practiced in numerous ways on a college campus. Recent societal events have shown that young people in the United States are stepping up and leading in ways to bring about positive social change. We have only to look at examples of students across the country who have felt empowered to act, addressing issues of racism, sexual violence, food insecurity, and climate concerns.

Our understanding of student leadership models, styles, and the impact of leadership education is informed by a breadth of scholarship. Leadership models specifically focused on college students have been developed (e.g., Komives, Lucas, & McMahan, 2013; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2017; Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Shankman & Allen, 2008). Research on college students and leadership has focused on leadership styles, behaviors, or approaches (Haber, 2012; Harper & Kezar, 2021; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000), and the impact of specific leadership development initiatives or experiences (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Haber & Komives, 2009; Rosch & Stephens, 2017). This literature provides insights into how students perceive leadership and frame insights for practitioners regarding the "best" leadership behaviors to consider when developing initiatives.

Yet many student leadership education approaches still “rely on leadership fads, reductionistic platitudes, and non-developmental approaches” (Owen, 2015, p. 8). With a shift toward viewing leadership as a social process and societal calls for transformational leadership, college student leadership education approaches must also shift. “College student leadership development is about fostering learning and growth in leadership contexts and teaching socially responsible and ethical leadership to the next generation of leaders” (Barnes, 2020, p. 100). The *New Directions for Student Leadership* series provides a foundation for CAPs and other higher education professionals to address the development of socially responsible leaders.

OVERVIEW OF THE *NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP* SERIES

To address the gap in the student leadership literature, and as part of their more extensive series on leadership, Jossey-Bass (a division of Wiley Publishers) launched *New Directions for Student Leadership* (NDSL) in 2015. NDSL is published quarterly to aid leadership educators in exploring “the dimensions of the development of leadership in high school youth and college students” (Komives & Guthrie, 2015, p. 1). The NDSL volumes expand beyond the traditional-focused research to address the role of identity in leadership development, followers as leaders, and the role of leadership educators in this developmental process, to name a few areas of focus. The conceptualization of leadership development across the NDSL volumes dovetails with the NACA: National Association for Campus Activities (hereafter NACA) framing regarding the role CAPs play in the development of college students. Series editors Komives and Guthrie note, “the world today needs more and better leaders from all contexts able to work together on messy problems. We feel this *New Directions* series will provide current and relevant information for educators and administrators working with students of all ages to develop their leadership capacity and leader identity” (Wiley Online Library, n.d.).

The series grounds itself in scholarship that features practical applications and good practice, and the insights gained can span leadership education and development across age groups. The journals’ chapters, featuring authors who are scholar-practitioners whose experiences range from traditional education to non-profit organization settings, offer insight into timely research, examples of theory in action, and suggestions for implementation in various settings. The series spans topics such as innovative learning, developmental readiness, assessment, integration of critical perspectives, and spirituality to highlight just a few areas of focus; for a complete listing, visit <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/23733357>. Given that the development of youth and college student leaders crosses many boundaries of practice, the series volumes provide useful knowledge and practical application for professionals engaged in any aspect of leadership education and development, whether as a full-time component of their work or as a portion of their work. Ultimately, this series is for you if you work with youth or young adults.

The NACA mission focuses on creating experiences through inclusive learning and meaningful connections (NACA, 2020). Building upon this mission and given institutional leadership demands for evidence-based and data-informed decisions, NACA developed a research agenda and launched the *Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship* (JCAPS). The NACA research agenda aims to guide the work of campus activities professionals in connecting emerging scholarship with practice (2021). The research agenda was designed, in part, “to advance the campus activities profession, and, in turn, the contributions of campus activities professionals to the student learning experience” (NACA, 2021, p). The NACA mission and research agenda are where the NDSL series can contribute to advancing the campus activities profession. This series aims not to perpetuate traditional views of leadership (e.g., hierarchical, male-oriented, extroverted), but to offer critical insights on scholarship and application specifically focused on the leadership development of youth and college students. NDSL can aid in integrating relevant, evidence-based approaches into the practice of campus activities professionals.

WAYS TO USE THE NDSL SERIES

“As leadership educators, today’s student activities professionals value evidence-based practices. We are thrilled that the NDSL series has provided a stream of practical, cutting-edge scholarship to guide these intentional practices. We are grateful for all the scholar-practitioners who have written about their experiences in our over 30 issues to date” (S. Komives, personal communication, January 7, 2022). Given the aim of the NDSL series to

offer practical insights on creating evidence-based practice, suggestions, and examples, highlighting aspects of specific volumes are offered as ways campus activities professionals might utilize the content. This is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of possibilities but to prompt campus activity professionals' interest in further exploration of individual volumes and the series in the course of their work.

Designing Initiatives

When developing or redesigning a leadership education initiative, reading volumes that speak specifically to the initiative's focus can offer evidence-based insights to consider. Understanding that good practice calls for utilizing theory to inform design, *Innovative Learning for Leadership Development* (Owen, 2015), offers insight into the recent scholarship on teaching and learning as well as “critically examin[ing] the intersections of learning and leadership” (Owen, 2015, p. 5). The authors within this volume approach their scholarship from three suppositions:

1. That leadership can and should be learned;
2. That the learning and development leadership capacities are inextricably intertwined; and
3. That leadership educators can purposefully foster learning environments that help students integrate knowledge, skills, and experiences in meaningful ways (Owen, 2015, p. 5).

Throughout this volume, chapter authors use Fink's (2013) taxonomy of significant learning experiences to scaffold and frame content related to aspects of leadership education. Fink's categories for promoting significant learning - foundational knowledge, application, integration, valuing the human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn - offer examples of ways to construct leadership education initiatives. This taxonomy can be useful whether designing leadership workshops, emerging leader programs, or training students within specific roles (i.e., peer advisors). How to consider developmental sequencing in design, integrative approaches that address “leadership for what?”, and applying emotionally intelligent leadership are just a few examples of applying theory and evidence-based practice in this volume.

Expanding upon the concepts identified in *Innovative Learning for Leadership Development* (Owen, 2015) for professionals tasked with the development of a credit-bearing leadership course, Barnes (2020) notes the focus of student leadership programs on understanding self and others as a key foundation (p. 100). A discussion of the guiding questions developed by the International Leadership Association (ILA, 2009) provides a helpful starting point for course development. Questions such as what conceptual framework will guide the curriculum, students' level of developmental readiness, and identification of teaching and learning methods that can contribute to maximum student learning provide curriculum development direction.

Importance of reflection

Multiple volumes offer ways to best incorporate reflection activities in leadership initiatives by recognizing the value of reflection to students' developing sense of self. Reflection can be built into intentional programs or in more informal settings with individual students to aid them in making sense of their experiences. *The Intersectionality of Leadership and Service-Learning* (Wagner & Pigza, 2016), for instance, makes a note of the benefits of critical reflection, which leads participants to investigate their underlying assumptions and beliefs, to question power dynamics [in service-learning], and to consider the difference between charity and change. Numerous chapters in this volume examine how practitioners can explore and respond to tensions surrounding context, reciprocity, power and privilege, and commitments to change and justice. Owen (2016) champions critical reflection as a tool for shifting students' thinking from an individual to a systems level where change may affect many.

Additional approaches to reflection through the use of case studies and assessment approaches are offered that provide useful direction for practitioners. This type of critical reflection also has benefits that extend beyond service-learning arenas. Kelly and Bhangal (2018) provide a framework for the utilization of life narratives as a way to move students from simple to critical self-reflection. This concept moves beyond teaching storytelling skills to engaging students in a journey of deep self-reflection around perspective, social identity, and power. This approach to critical self-reflection can directly contribute to the development of the socially conscious leaders noted earlier.

Addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Recent societal events (e.g., the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the storming of the U.S. Capital) have renewed the need to focus on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the leadership development of college students. Dugan (2018), in *Integrating Critical Perspectives Into Leadership Development*, challenged “that without critical social theory as an integral part of leadership development, not only will we fail to prepare young people to engage with the realities of the world as it is, but we create limiting thresholds to envisioning a more democratic and equitable future” (p. 6). To build upon the challenge Dugan (2018) set, Barnes, Olson, and Reynolds (2018) argue that leadership development curricula must examine the role of power in our society. They offer several reflective questions for leadership educators to consider related to their own preconceived notions of leadership, characteristics of a “good” leader, and what role power plays in constructing learning experiences (pp. 82-83). Examples within this volume of utilizing a life narratives approach and an exercise that explores implicit leader prototypes provide CAPs with additional approaches to incorporate into leadership education.

Given that campuses may struggle to involve a diversity of students in initiatives, Kidd Houze (2021) in *Leadership Learning Through the Lens of Social Class*, addresses the expectation that traditional positional student leader roles (i.e., student government, housing, orientation) require obligations related to money, time, and flexibility that some students are not able to meet. One example offered to expand the engagement of poor and working-class students in leadership experiences is to examine applications for such roles. Selection rubrics could be adjusted to acknowledge and value the work responsibilities, academic commitment, and other outside obligations these students would bring to an experience (Kidd Houze, 2021).

Assessment and Accountability

In this time of increased accountability in higher education, gaining knowledge on good assessment practices is beneficial. *Assessing Student Leadership* (Roberts & Bailey, 2016) addresses the need for CAPs to develop a structured assessment plan incorporating multiple methods over time and experience, particularly given increased institutional focus and priority on student learning. The development of such plans should include consistent language across initiatives, decisions on what to assess, and with whom collaboration might be possible (Roberts & Bailey, 2016). Building upon the concept of reflection noted earlier, Preston and Peck (2016) offer several examples of reflection in learning as ways to not only prompt students to think but also to assess the impact on student learning of the leadership experiences provided. Their examples range from episodic, the most common form of reflection, to periodic to metacognitive. For those campus activities professionals who are newer to the concept of assessment, Piatt and Woodruff (2016) provide practical suggestions for developing a comprehensive assessment plan, sharing examples from two institutions to provide contextual understanding.

Global Leadership

As we continue to see an increase in globally connected organizations, leadership education needs to keep pace. But many CAPs may be less familiar with ways to guide the development of global leaders. Roberts and Roberts (2018) offer background and insights on cultivating international perspectives as well as several examples of practice in their volume *Cultivating Students' Capacity for International Leadership*. “It is our belief...that advocating for an international perspective in leadership learning is not an add-on; it is core to a fulsome understanding of leadership in today’s world” (Roberts & Roberts, 2018, p. 5). Specifically, addressing global leadership might offer a collaboration opportunity with an office of international student services and a study abroad office to engage international and domestic students in developing a global leadership mindset. Additionally, Widner-Edberg (2018) offers a model of global leadership as well as several best practices for implementation.

Professional Development

While the focus of leadership education and development is often on students, practitioners themselves can also benefit from enhancing their own professional development. Many volumes in the series offer insights on professional growth and development for practitioners and educators. In consideration of training for student organization advisors, for example, Kane (2017) provides contextual background on the role of student organization advisors that could be utilized as a springboard to a discussion about individual perceptions and challenges of

serving in such roles. “[W]hether the advisor spends time in maintenance roles, growth roles, or content roles..., advisor involvement offers the opportunity for leader development through interaction between advisor and student” (Kane, 2017, p. 62). This idea can then serve as an opportunity to work with advisors on developing intentional ways they can contribute to student leadership development.

Often campus activities professionals are charged with developing training, workshops, and other leadership initiatives but may not feel prepared, well-versed, or believe in themselves as leadership educators. *Becoming and Being a Leadership Educator* (Priest & Jenkins, 2019) provides numerous examples of ways an individual could enhance their view of self-as-leadership-educator or ways to design discussions and workshops for new leadership educators on campus. Reflective exercises offer the opportunity to identify one’s distinct talents, experiences, and skills brought into their work. Seemiller and Crosby (2019) offer six specific exercises for leadership educators to utilize in their self-exploration and leadership educator identity development.

Additional ways to utilize NDSL volumes in professional development could include identifying a current issue on one’s campus and using a related volume as a “book club” discussion activity. This offers campus activities professionals the opportunity to invite others to participate and to share their expertise as part of such discussions. In another example, individual chapters within a volume could be utilized to frame a leadership workshop for professionals from across a variety of functional areas.

These examples represent just a few ways that campus activities professionals could utilize the content, in whole or specific chapters only, to enhance their practice, expand their professional development, and contribute to developing innovative and inclusive student leaders. Utilizing NDSL supports NACA’s mission and vision to “create inclusive learning, meaningful connections” and “create college communities where everyone belongs” (NACA: National Association for Campus Activities, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The *New Directions for Student Leadership* series provides campus activities professionals with approaches to integrating theory and practice in practitioner-oriented ways. The series provides campus activities professionals with research and scholarship to create or enhance their own evidence-based leadership development practices. The content within each volume offers connections to and insights on NACA’s research agenda foci on the influence of campus activities on student learning and the professional development and contributions of campus activities professionals (NACA, 2021). The volumes are written in a way that makes the content accessible, no matter one’s functional area. I hope campus activities professionals will become more familiar with the NDSL series and utilize the volumes as resources in their work as a way to imagine and contribute to the creation of the future of leadership education and students-as-leaders within their sphere.

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